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Correspondence vol. 1 (1607-1639).**

Vincent de Paul

Pierre Coste C.M.

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SAINT  
VINCENT DE PAUL

CORRESPONDENCE

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VOLUME I



Reproduction of a painting which had once belonged to Queen Anne of Austria and then to the Hôtel des Invalides. It is now in the possession of the Motherhouse of the Priests of the Mission, 95 rue de Sèvres, Paris. In the opinion of experts, this portrait was painted in the time of Saint Vincent de Paul by an artist who had the Saint before him.

SAINT  
VINCENT DE PAUL

CORRESPONDENCE

CONFERENCES, DOCUMENTS

I

CORRESPONDENCE

VOLUME I (1607 - 1639)

NEWLY TRANSLATED, EDITED, AND ANNOTATED

FROM THE 1920 EDITION

OF

PIERRE COSTE, C.M.



DONATION AUG 11 1980



TO  
**VERY REVEREND JAMES W. RICHARDSON, C.M.**  
WHO AS SUPERIOR GENERAL  
OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION  
AND  
OF THE COMPANY OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY  
INITIATED AND ENCOURAGED  
THIS WORK

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*May 25, 1983*

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**PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION  
OF FATHER COSTE'S WORK**

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Some three years before the death of Saint Vincent, on the 15th of August 1657, Brother Ducournau, who had been Saint Vincent's faithful and hardworking secretary for close on twenty years, wrote a short memorandum on the importance of preserving in writing what he calls "the holy discourses of Monsieur Vincent." Brother Ducournau was looking to the future and he set out not only arguments for but the rebuttals of the arguments against preserving what Saint Vincent had said.

*"It is important, it would seem, for the Company in the future to possess an exact collection of the holy discourses of M. Vincent and to preserve them, for the following reasons:*

*1st. The best bequest of fathers is the good advice and instructions they leave their children.*

*2nd. In the world, men take great care to have an inventory made out, and possession taken, of a perishable heritage. . . .*

*3rd. . . . those who waste a splendid, entailed estate do an irreparable injury to their successors. . . .*

*4th. If the works he has accomplished are works of God, as they seem to be, God must have*

*bestowed His Spirit on them in order to accomplish and maintain them; consequently, the advice and instruction employed to that end should be regarded as divine, and collected as a heavenly manna, whose various flavors attracted so many different sorts of persons of both sexes and of every rank in life, who have associated themselves in various ways, on behalf of so many different enterprises, and who have been supported by his guidance. . . .”* (Chollier: Ms. account of Brother Ducournau, pp. 151 ff.)

Brother Ducournau must be vigorously clapping his hands — if applause is allowed in heaven — to manifest his approval and satisfaction at the work which has been done in publishing in the English language an official translation of the entire works of Saint Vincent. Congratulations are certainly in order to a host of people who over the years have asked for and encouraged the publication of these volumes. Our most generous tribute of praise and gratitude must be offered to those who have laboured to present us with this English translation of “the holy discourses of M. Vincent.”

It is now some sixty years since Father Pierre Coste, C.M., critically edited the correspondence, conferences, and writings of Saint Vincent. It was Father Coste, too, who has written the three volume definitive biography of the Saint. Happily this biography has been translated into English by Father Joseph Leonard, C.M., who also succeeded in publishing a translation of the Conferences to the Daughters of Charity, as well as a volume of letters from the Saint’s correspondence. To date, however, we in the English-speaking world have been without an official translation of the entirety of what Father Coste edited. This void, and it has been a keenly felt one, is now being filled. Hopefully within the next four years or so, all Saint Vincent’s writings will be available to us in English. The work will go

even beyond that of Father Coste, for the volumes which are presently being prepared will contain some material of Saint Vincent which has come to light during the past forty years and was unavailable to Father Coste — furthermore, the original footnotes of the French edition have been revised and supplemented.

The Editorial Board has made a wise decision in commencing the project of translation with Saint Vincent's correspondence. His correspondence fills eight volumes of Father Coste's French edition. In these volumes, dare I say it, one finds Saint Vincent at his best. Someone once observed that it is better to write for oneself and have no public, than to write for the public and have no self. Saint Vincent certainly did not write for the public. He wrote to individuals, addressing himself to their particular queries and needs. He wrote, as he counseled us to do, with God alone in view. For that reason, the letters of Saint Vincent are particularly valuable in revealing to us the depth of his insight into the human condition, the length of his patience, and the breadth of his love.

“Ignorance of the Scriptures means ignorance of Christ” observed Saint Jerome. It could be said that to be unacquainted with the writings of Saint Vincent is to miss knowing him deeply. The writings of Saint Vincent are like a deep mine from which we can quarry strong rocks of wisdom upon which we can build our own lives and the lives of the poor of Jesus Christ. Let me echo that voice which Saint Augustine mysteriously heard saying: “Take up and read . . . take up and read.”

RICHARD McCULLEN, C.M.  
Superior General

Rome, 9 November 1983



LETTER FROM FATHER VERDIER  
Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission  
To Pierre Coste, C.M.

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Paris, February 17, 1920

Father and very dear Confrere,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You undertook and have just brought to a successful conclusion a fine and carefully done work which is destined to make Saint Vincent de Paul better known through the publication of his letters.

The first printed collection, going back to 1880, is nearly out of print; in addition, it has many gaps. Yours, which is more complete, will contain several hundred letters, unpublished or only partially known, which had escaped the research of your predecessor. You have added, and the innovation is fitting, letters received by the Saint.

Having recalled that immediately after his death the number of his letters was estimated at about 30,000, and that in the eighteenth century Collet had been able to consult almost 7,000, the editor of 1880 adds, not without some sadness: "Today we have only 2,500 of them; the others, alas! are lost forever or buried in private archives. However incomplete this collection may be when compared to what has perished, no means of enriching it have been neglected, and there is very little chance of adding to it hereafter in any appreciable way."

You were unwilling to make this resignation your own; and if it is true that fortune favors the daring, it is no less true that Providence rewards the persevering. You are an encouraging example of this fact. You searched diligently, for a long time and everywhere, even as far as America, and made invaluable discoveries; invaluable because of the great number of new letters, invaluable because of the intrinsic worth of many of them. These discoveries allowed you to complete letters of which we possessed only a part, to date others more accurately, and to correct the names of certain recipients which were doubtful until now or at times incorrect.

You knew how to seek and to find; you knew how to read so as to restore to us the text of Saint Vincent in its perfect integrity. It is truly the Saint still speaking and still repeating to us what he wished to say to his



correspondents in the way and with the forms and expressions with which he wished to say it.

It gives me great pleasure to thank you for this work. The better great men are known, the more they are appreciated; and if they are truly great men, they are loved even more. Saint Vincent has a conspicuous place among these truly great men; the Church recognizes him and proclaims him one of her heroes; and his country, too, counts him among those of her children who bring her the most honor.

The reading of his letters, in which he paints his own portrait, will make him better known and, consequently, better loved. By knowing him better and loving him more, your readers, or rather his, will feel themselves grow better, not to mention the special pleasure that will be experienced by those lovers of things of the spirit, connoisseurs of the history and customs of the epoch in which the Saint lived.

Not only will the children of Saint Vincent de Paul's spiritual family, the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity, be in a position to enjoy this interest in edification and erudition; the great associations which lay claim to his name, the Ladies of Charity, the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul, and still others, less known but no less attached to his name and his spirit, will likewise be able to relish it.

Finally, the literary public itself will have every facility for becoming more intimately acquainted with this great man and this great Saint. Your work, in fact, while it brings about a happy contradiction to the preceding editor's discouraged regrets concerning the number of letters, also satisfies his desire to make this treasure public. "Such a work," he says speaking of his collection, "if it were made available to the public, could not fail to arouse the interest of its readers to whom it would offer a considerable number of documents as precious as they are edifying and almost all unpublished."

This wish is now fulfilled and well fulfilled, thanks to your publication.

All that remains is for me to wish your work the widest distribution, a wish that I make wholeheartedly as I await with entire confidence its realization.

Believe me always, Father and very dear Confrere, most devotedly yours in Our Lord.

F. VERDIER, C.M.  
Superior General

## INTRODUCTION TO THE FRENCH EDITION

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Saint Vincent de Paul was a man of action. He also wrote a great deal. A man of action is, perforce, a man of relationships, and the more numerous the relationships are, the more abundant is the correspondence necessary to maintain them.

It is estimated that more than thirty thousand letters were penned by the Saint or his secretaries. According to Collet,<sup>1</sup> there were still six or seven thousand of them in 1748. After more than three centuries, this treasure has been considerably impoverished. We would not be able to publish even eighteen hundred of them today if we were to adhere to letters for which we have the complete text.

Of all Vincent de Paul's correspondents, none was in more regular contact with him than Louise de Marillac. This collection contains about 400 letters from the Saint to his devout collaborator. The most favored after her is Firmin Get, Superior of the house in Marseilles, to whom 150 letters were written. Jean Martin, Superior in Turin, received about 130; Edmond Jolly, Superior in Rome, almost 120; Charles Ozenne, Superior in Warsaw, about 100; and

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<sup>1</sup>Pierre Collet, *La vie de saint Vincent de Paul* (2 vols., Nancy: A. Leseure, 1748), I, p.IV. Pierre Collet was born August 31, 1693, in Ternay (Vendôme). He entered the Congregation of the Mission September 6, 1717, probably as an ordained priest, and pronounced vows September 7, 1719. He died October 6, 1770.

Etienne Blatiron, Superior in Genoa, almost 80. Then come in order of number Bernard Codoing, Brother Jean Parre, Antoine Portail, Louis Rivet, Jacques Pesnelle, Marc Coglée, all members of the Congregation of the Mission. For several years the Saint made it a rule to write every week to the Superiors of the houses in Marseilles, Rome, Genoa, Turin, Warsaw, and others;<sup>2</sup> he was faithful to this even when he had nothing to say.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, in many cases, the dates of the letters we still have allow us to guess, almost with certainty, the dates of those that are lost.

Except when illness prevented him from doing so, Vincent de Paul never stopped writing in his own hand to Louise de Marillac. Until 1645 he took care of all his correspondence himself. That year, overwhelmed with work, he took as his secretary his compatriot, Brother Bertrand Ducournau,<sup>4</sup> who was educated, wrote well, loved the work, and joined boundless dedication to unerring judgment. The following year Brother Louis Robineau<sup>5</sup> was appointed sec-

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<sup>2</sup>See the following letters: to Brother Jean Parre, November 16, 1658 (vol. VII, no. 2722); to Bernard Codoing, October 9, 1643 (vol. II, no. 680); to Jean Martin, September 14, 1646 (vol. III, no. 859); to Lambert aux Couteaux, May 3, 1652 (vol. IV, no. 1494); to Etienne Blatiron, January 2, 1654 (vol. V, no. 1694); to Charles Ozenne, October 15, 1655 (vol. V, no. 1942); and to Antoine Durand, December 21, 1657 (vol. VI, no. 2492). In 1658, Saint Vincent wrote to Charles Ozenne only every two weeks. (Cf. letter of January 18, 1658 [vol. VII, no. 2513].)

<sup>3</sup>See the letter of October 12, 1657, to Charles Ozenne (vol. VI, no. 2409) and the one to Brother Jean Parre, November 30, 1658 (vol. VII, no. 2738).

<sup>4</sup>The first letter written by Brother Ducournau is that of May 3, 1645 (vol. II, no. 749), to Jacques Chiroye.

Bertrand Ducournau, born in 1614 in Arnou (Landes), was received into the Congregation of the Mission on July 28, 1644, in the capacity of coadjutor brother and pronounced his vows on October 9, 1646. Since he had a fine penmanship, a judicious sense, and a shrewd, frank, and reliable experience of affairs from the diverse positions which he had occupied in the world, Saint Vincent made him his secretary in 1645. By his devotion, his tact, and his love of work, this good Brother rendered inestimable services to Saint Vincent and his Congregation. It can be said that, by his preparation of materials and his personal notes, he contributed more than Abelly himself to the first biography of Saint Vincent. After the death of the Saint, Brother Ducournau remained secretary to the Superiors General (René Almérás and Edmond Jolly) and archivist of Saint-Lazare. He died in Paris on January 3, 1677. (Cf. vol. III, no. 831.)

<sup>5</sup>Louis Robineau, born in Neuvy-en-Dunois (Eure-et-Loir), entered the Congregation of the Mission on November 8, 1642, at the age of twenty-one, and pronounced his vows on

ond secretary. The extant letters are almost all in the handwriting of Saint Vincent or of these two Brothers. The transcription of Circular Letters was entrusted to temporary secretaries.

The Saint sometimes says that he is dictating his letters.<sup>6</sup> Was he in the habit of doing this, and did the word “dic-tate” have in his mind the absolute meaning we give it today? One cannot help but notice a considerable difference between the style of the letters written by his own hand and those simply bearing his signature. The former are more concise, more virile, more lively; they have more the stamp of the superior who holds authority and is conscious of his responsibility. We perceive more clearly in these letters the language of a man who speaks in his own name, and they are more interesting to read.

Once his letter was finished, Saint Vincent would reread it, make the corrections he thought necessary, sign it, and add whatever he had forgotten in a postscript. Then he folded it and applied the seal that can be seen at the beginning of this volume. The seal pictured the Savior evangelizing the poor. Around it, the words *Superior Generalis Congreg. Missionis* indicated on the outside the source of the letter.

His many occupations left the Saint little time for his correspondence, so we find him making use even of free moments spent outside his house.<sup>7</sup> He himself says in one of his letters that he was writing it out in the street.<sup>8</sup> He often

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November 1, 1650. For thirty years he fulfilled the functions of secretary in the service of Saint Vincent and wrote for the author of the Saint's biography some notes which we still have. (Cf. vol. IV, no. 1527.)

<sup>6</sup>See the letters of June 21, 1653, to Emerand Bajoue (vol. IV, no. 1633); of August 10, 1657, to Edmond Jolly (vol. VI, no. 2333); and of August 24, 1659, to François Feydin (vol. VIII, no. 2948).

<sup>7</sup>See the letters of June 30, 1656, to Jean Martin (vol. V, no. 2089); and of October 25, 1658 (vol. VII, no. 2693), and June 26, 1654, to Firmin Get (vol. V, no. 1756).

<sup>8</sup>Letter of July 28, 1651, to Jean Martin (vol. IV, no. 1388).

took time from his rest, and sometimes, overcome by fatigue, he would fall asleep while he was writing; the handwriting of several letters clearly shows the influence of sleep.<sup>9</sup>

Before 1639, the date always follows the signature except when there is no room at the bottom of the page;<sup>10</sup> from 1640 on, it is always put at the top.<sup>11</sup> Letters to Louise de Marillac are dated only when she is traveling or when the Saint himself is away from Paris. When the date is missing, it is often replaced by the day of the week.

The letters to the Missionaries and to the Sisters all begin with this greeting: "The grace of Our Lord be with you forever," a quite sincere expression of the most intimate desire of his heart. Certain feast days suggested a different form at times: "May the Holy Passion of Our Savior urge us to do and to bear everything for His love!"<sup>12</sup> or: "May the devotion of Our Lord's disciples assembled to pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit be impressed upon your heart forever!"<sup>13</sup>

Saint Vincent appears to us in his letters as his biographers describe him: simple; good; humble; wise; practical; not losing sight of the most minute details of a business matter; his eyes always raised to God, his rule and his guide; grateful for benefits received; and full of respect for people holding high positions.

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<sup>9</sup>For example, the letter of March 15, 1638, to Lambert aux Couteaux (vol. I, no. 316).

<sup>10</sup>This is the case with regard to the letter of November 2, 1636, to Saint Louise (vol. I, no. 248); of February 21, 1638, to Antoine Lucas (vol. I, no. 307); of February 20, and March 15 and 22, 1638, to Lambert aux Couteaux (vol. I, nos. 306, 316, and 320); and of June 2, 1638, to Jean Bécu (vol. I, no. 326). The copyists have almost always placed the date and the day of the week at the head of the letter.

<sup>11</sup>From July 1639 to January 1, 1640, the Saint varies; at times the old habit prevails.

<sup>12</sup>Letters of April 11, 1659, to Guillaume Desdames and Edmond Jolly (vol. VII, nos. 2810 and 2811).

<sup>13</sup>Letter of May 24, 1637, to Saint Louise (vol. I, no. 267).

He goes straight to the point except when he has a reproach to make, for then he begins by humiliating himself.

When he quotes Scripture, most often from memory, we must not look for completely faithful reproductions of the sacred text.

He knew how to give his sentences an original twist, for example: "M. Alméras no longer has a fever, nor have I any news to give you."<sup>14</sup> Or he sets aside the serious tone to say a pleasant word: "I am indeed consoled," he writes to the Superior in Turin, "that Brother Desmortiers has made such progress in the language that he is able to say: *Signor, si*."<sup>15</sup> After telling about the shipwreck of a vessel carrying some Missionaries who were being sent to Madagascar, the Saint adds that, having gotten into a small boat with provisions for three or four days, they arrived at Saint-Jean-de-Luz after two long weeks "in good health and with a good appetite."<sup>16</sup>

Although Saint Vincent was not much given to distractions, we find a few in his correspondence. One of his letters to Pierre Escart, Priest of the Mission, ends with the words, "who am, in His love, Madame, your most humble servant."<sup>17</sup> This title of *Madame* he absentmindedly gives to Mademoiselle Le Gras on two occasions.<sup>18</sup> Two letters were left unfinished without the Saint's noticing it.<sup>19</sup> Here and there we find words repeated, left out,<sup>20</sup> or obviously incor-

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<sup>14</sup>Letter of June 19, 1654, to Thomas Berthe (vol. V, no. 1752). See also the letters of August 14, 1638, to Robert de Sergis (vol. I, no. 339); and of December 1, 1646, to Antoine Portail (vol. III, no. 899).

<sup>15</sup>Letter of June 22, 1657, to Jean Martin (vol. VI, no. 2290).

<sup>16</sup>Letter of January 9, 1660, to Guillaume Desdames (vol. VIII, no. 3063).

<sup>17</sup>Letter of August 26, 1640 (vol. II, no. 476).

<sup>18</sup>Vol. I, nos. 49 and 151.

<sup>19</sup>Letters of September 17, 1647, to Mathurin Gentil (vol. III, no. 985) and of June 13, 1654, to Marc Coglée (vol. V, no. 1751).

<sup>20</sup>Letters of December 1654 (vol. V, no. 1819) and of August 1, 1659 (vol. VIII, no. 2927), to Jean Martin and of March 1659 to Saint Louise (vol. VII, no. 2791).

rect.<sup>21</sup> We have had to rectify several inaccurate dates in the originals.<sup>22</sup> With regard to these distractions, which can easily be counted they are so rare, we must take the secretaries into account.

The letters of Saint Vincent merit publication as historical documents to provide information on the life of this great man who unquestionably holds first place in the history of charity, and must be ranked foremost among reformers of the French clergy. They also merit it because of their literary value, which places their author among the fine prose writers of the French language in the seventeenth century.

We still possess the originals of a good number of his letters, the majority divided into five collections or files.

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*Files of the Mission.* — The Motherhouse of the Priests of the Mission possesses 305 originals,<sup>23</sup> 36 rough drafts, 10 facsimiles, and 42 copies from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was much richer before the Revolution. The looting of Saint-Lazare in 1789, the dissolution of the Congregation in 1792, and gifts given too frequently have contributed to its impoverishment. All these letters, with the exception of seventeen, were published in 1880 along with the other letters of the Saint by the Secretary General of the

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<sup>21</sup>Letters of May 13, 1639, to Robert de Sergis (vol. I, no. 377); of November 13, 1640, to Jacques Tholard (vol. II, no. 495); of November 20, 1644, to Guillaume Delville (vol. II, no. 733); of February 14, 1648, to Antoine Portail (vol. III, no. 1016); of March 22, 1652, to Lambert aux Couteaux (vol. IV, no. 1473); of June 13, 1654, to Marc Coglée (vol. V, no. 1751); and of February 5, 1660, to Jean Martin (vol. VIII, no. 3075).

<sup>22</sup>Letters of May 1, 1633 (vol. I, no. 137), and December 12, 1639 (vol. I, no. 411), to Saint Louise; of March 22, 1652, to Lambert aux Couteaux (vol. IV, no. 1473); of October 10, 1657, to Jacques Chiroye (vol. VI, no. 2408); and of September 12, 1659, to Guillaume Desdames (vol. VIII, no. 2980).

<sup>23</sup>Three hundred forty-seven if we add the forty-two letters from the Hains file which will be mentioned further on.

Congregation of the Mission, Father Jean-Baptiste Pémartin.

*Files of the Daughters of Charity.* — The collection preserved at the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity is made up almost entirely of letters to Louise de Marillac and to the first Sisters of the Company. It comprises 275 originals, of which 22 eluded Father Pémartin's research.

*Files of Turin.* — The Turin files were created at the time of the Revolution. The letters composing them were brought from Paris to the house of the Priests of the Mission in Turin by Carlo-Domenico Siccardi, Assistant of the Congregation, who had been entrusted with depositing them in a safe place. There are 346 of them: 324 originals, 11 rough drafts, and 11 copies from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Twenty-four are unpublished. We find in this collection almost all the letters to Jean Martin.

*Files of Cracow.* — On December 5, 1904, the originals of 167 letters addressed to the first Missionaries of Poland were brought to Father Józef Kiedrowski, Visitor of the Province of Poland and Superior of the house in Cracow. There were 150 of them from Saint Vincent, 1 from the Queen of Poland, 2 from René Alméras, 2 from Edmond Jolly, 2 from Jean Dehorgny, 2 from Thomas Berthe, etc. It is thought that these documents belonged to the Warsaw house before the dispersion of 1864, and that a Priest of the Mission had placed them in safekeeping with a Catholic family.<sup>24</sup> Father Pémartin was familiar with all but five of these letters.

*Files of the Hains family.* — At the time of the dispersion of religious Congregations at the end of the eighteenth century, Jean-Baptiste Moissonnier, Superior of the house in

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<sup>24</sup>*Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission*, 1905, vol. LXX, p. 210.



Marseilles, took with him the letters of Saint Vincent preserved in the archives of that house. After his death (January 17, 1813), these letters went to M. Nodet, his heir, father-in-law of M. Hains, a merchant in Marseilles, who had 57 of them in 1886. The latter's daughter, a Daughter of Charity in Neuilly-sur-Seine, still had 42 of them until recently. She has just parted with them generously in order to give them to the Superior General of the Priests of the Mission. In the beginning, the files contained more than 150 letters. The ones that are left are almost all addressed to Firmin Get. Four of them are missing in the collection published in 1880.

The originals placed on sale by the Charavay firm of Paris would form an important collection by themselves alone if they were gathered together, because there are about ninety of them. We were able to copy some of them on the premises before they were sold, or trace them to collectors. The majority of these letters are known to us only through copies, through the work of Father Pémartin, or through the concise information given in catalogues.

The Sainte-Geneviève Library would have furnished us with ten originals if an unscrupulous hand had not gone off with them. There are at least copies of them left,<sup>25</sup> all transcribed — except for the letter to the Abbot of Grandmont — by Father Prévot, who wrote on the back of folio 2: "These letters from Blessed Vincent, written for the most part to the archivist of the Congregation of Sainte-Geneviève, are in a folio volume entitled on the back: *Lettres de prélats depuis l'an 1653 jusqu'en 1660*. The volume is bound with green sheepskin and contains some letters prior to 1653." The volume is still extant, but without the letters in question. Four of the originals have since been put up for sale by M. Charavay.

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<sup>25</sup>Ms. 2555.

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The old collections of Saint Vincent's letters have been of great use to us. We find in them a number of letters for which we no longer have the originals. Let us review the principal ones.

At the time of the process of beatification of Saint Vincent, several sessions were dedicated, as is customary, to the examination of his writings. The tribunal had 344 letters reviewed and kept 32, probably the most important, in order to add them to the dossier of the process. These 32 originals, all in the Saint's own handwriting, belonged to the house of Saint-Lazare. Experts were called in to ascertain their authenticity. A sworn copyist transcribed them into the volume of the official written records of the sessions. The copy was compared to the original and the slight deviations that were discovered were noted in the margin. Therefore, these are authentic copies, of the same value as the originals. It is still possible today to see the perfect conformity of those letters whose originals have not been lost. Among these letters, 5 are unpublished; 20 were known to us only by fragments, which had usually been altered; and the other 7 give us a more authentic text than that published in 1880.

The Archives of the Mission possess two old registers of copies, which we shall call, in order to distinguish them, Register 1 and Register 2. Register 1 is bound with boards and measures 340 by 220 millimeters. These Italian words written on the first page tell us the number of letters it contained when it was complete: *Copie di lettere n° cento settantotto-178-scritte da San Vincenzo di Paoli portate da Parigi l'anno 1792*. The disappearance of the last page or pages has reduced the number to 174. The 175th letter begins at the end of the seventy-second page and was continued on the seventy-third, which we no longer have.

A portrait of Saint Vincent, beneath which are written the

words: *Sanctus Vincentius a Paulo, Congregationis Missionis et Puellarum Charitatis fundator*, was added at the beginning of the collection. The manuscript itself could well belong to the seventeenth century. The writing, though not beautiful, is legible. The letters are given in their entirety. The designations: "signed, not signed, holograph, hand-written rough draft," indicate that the copyist had before him the original documents themselves or copies of them. No letters to the Priests of the Mission are found in this collection. Four are addressed to the Queen of France, 3 to the Queen of Poland, 2 to the Pope, 2 to Mazarin, 1 to the Nuncio, 9 to cardinals, 23 to bishops, 7 to the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, 1 to Turenne, 1 to Louise de Marillac, 5 to Daughters of Charity, 11 to Mademoiselle du Fay, 11 to Visitation nuns, 2 to Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, 2 to Louis de Chandénier, etc. As far as can be judged from the 13 letters of the Register whose originals have come down to us, we can rely completely on the accuracy of the text. All but one of the letters in this collection appeared in 1880.

In the manuscript life of René Alméras, Saint Vincent's successor, we read: "It is impossible to express the care he took to follow step by step the mind of this first Superior. Not satisfied with having brought to light his life, in which the qualities of his direction are described, he felt it his duty to search further among his letters where he has, as it were, engraved his spirit, his maxims, and his character on an infinity of subjects while speaking to all sorts of people. To this end, he had excerpts taken from them and had them bound in thirteen or fourteen quires. . . . And in order that those who would succeed him in the direction of the Company might also profit from these same letters and more easily draw from them the instructions they would need, a few months before his death<sup>26</sup> he had them arranged accord-

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<sup>26</sup>September 22, 1672.

ing to subject matter and transcribed accurately into large bound books as a precious treasure for the Company.”

These excerpts were classified under fifteen headings:

1. Institution, perfection, government and works of the Congregation of the Mission in general
2. Orders and advices given to Visitors and Superiors
3. Admonitions, words of encouragement, and congratulations to individuals
4. Missions in Christian countries and among unbelievers
5. Seminaries and other functions of the Institute
6. Practice of certain virtues
7. Deceased members of the Company
8. Letters of consolation to lay people who were undergoing a trial
9. Gratitude to friends and benefactors
10. Advice given and good works suggested even to distinguished people of rank
11. Various business affairs
12. Struggle against Jansenism
13. Assistance of the poor
14. Direction of the Daughters of Charity
15. Direction of the Visitation nuns

Volume I is the only one we have. It covers merely the first three parts of this vast program. We shall call it Register 2. It is 370 millimeters high and 270 millimeters wide. It contains 350 pages and gives us 549 fragments, or rather 548, because one of them is a duplication. More than 100 of these fragments are from letters whose entire text we have elsewhere. With the exception of about 20, all are excerpts from letters addressed to members of the Congregation of the Mission. The handwriting is beautiful, regular, and can be read quite easily. The copyist never writes the word *Monsieur* at the beginning of the letters, nor the initial greeting customary with the Saint. He did not feel obliged

to copy the original in a servile way. Ordinarily he arranges the first sentence of his excerpts in such a way as to remove any dependence on the part he omits. He modernizes the vocabulary and does away with lengthy sentences. However, his modifications are not of great consequence and, on the whole, his text is indeed that of the original. So that some idea of this may be grasped, here, from letter 91,<sup>27</sup> is the passage he altered the most:

Text of Register 2. — *He* did me the honor of telling me that he had consulted his religious about our manner of acting in choir, the housing and furniture, and the board that those who would wish to live with us would pay. Now, *with regard to this last point*, which is that each religious would pay only two hundred livres board, I shall tell you, *Monsieur*, that I accept this most willingly, although having calculated the expense *on the present cost of living*, it will cost us more, and although the board payments even for the students are *eighty écus*.

Real text. — *The above-mentioned Prior* did me the honor of telling me *yesterday evening* that he had consulted his religious about our manner of acting in choir, the housing and furniture, and the board that those who would wish to live with us would pay. Now, *with regard to the last difficulty*, which is that each religious would pay only two hundred livres board, I accept this most willingly, although I have calculated the expense *exactly from what it has cost us at present* and it will cost us more, and although even the students are paying *ninety écus*.

However insignificant these changes may be, it is to be regretted that the copyist made them. His excuse is that he was living in the seventeenth century which did not have, like the twentieth, a concern for meticulous accuracy. The

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<sup>27</sup>Letter to Guillaume de Lestocq, Pastor of Saint-Laurent.

majority of his contemporaries proved less scrupulous than he. We are borrowing eight unpublished fragments from Register 2.

Manuscript 1292 of the Municipal Library of Avignon is described as follows in the catalogue: "Eighteenth century, paper, 94 pages, 262 by 190 millimeters, bound in chamois leather." The title is: *Lettres choisies du Vénérable Vincent de Paul, instituteur et premier Supérieur Général de la . . . Congrégation de la Mission*. These letters, or rather these excerpts from letters, 99 in all, to which are added as a supplement 10 other fragments, are arranged in 8 groups according to the instruction they contain:

1. Trust in God and abandonment to Providence
2. Perseverance in one's vocation
3. Regularity and perfection
4. Care of health and charity towards the neighbor
5. Care of the sick, mutual support and union
6. Courage to overcome one's own inclinations for the glory of God
7. Trust in God and mistrust of self
8. Prayer, gratitude

Almost all the fragments of the Avignon manuscript are in Register 2 and are found there with the same variants. Of the three fragments that are the exception, two are known from other sources. Therefore, we shall borrow from this manuscript only one excerpt, which has already been published in the 1880 collection.<sup>28</sup>

The Avignon manuscript represents a collection of manuscripts in fairly general use in the houses of the Priests

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<sup>28</sup>This excerpt, no. 968 (vol. III), is taken from a manuscript entitled: *Lettres choisies du Bienh. Vincent de Paul, instituteur et premier supérieur général de la congrégation de la Mission*. This anthology, compiled between 1729 and 1737, is found at the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity. It is from the same family as the Avignon manuscript, reproduces all the letters in the same order, and adds a ninth section containing nineteen letters, all related to the direction of the Daughters of Charity.

of the Mission before 1792. We still have two other examples of it left.

One of them is manuscript 20 of the Chamber of Deputies: eighteenth century, paper, 143 pages, 200 by 145 millimeters, bound in sheepskin. It has the same title, the same divisions, the same grouping of the letters, reduced here to 75. In addition, we find in it a copy of the alleged death sentence passed against Our Lord by Pilate and a supplement of 23 fragments, all relating to the Company of the Daughters of Charity, which are found only in this manuscript. Of these fragments, 5 have remained unpublished.

The other manuscript is at the Motherhouse of the Priests of the Mission. It is bound in boards, belongs to the second half of the eighteenth century, and contains 74 fragments on 122 pages. It measures 217 by 150 millimeters. It stops at the sixth part, of which it gives only one letter, or rather, letter fragment. In short, it is an incomplete copy of the Avignon manuscript and has nothing special to offer.

Manuscript 869 of the Lyons Library bears the title: *Livre contenant l'abrégé de la vie des prêtres, clercs et frères de la Congrégation de la Mission qui ont vécu et qui sont morts dans la pratique des vertus convenables à leur vocation*. In this collection, wherein we find the full-length accounts about René Alméras, Edmond Jolly, and Jean-Baptiste Anselme, Priests of the Mission, a place was assigned to the correspondence of Saint Vincent. The *Extraits des lettres de saint Vincent* go from folio 168 to folio 196. They contain the eulogy of recently deceased Missionaries. Some of these fragments have not yet been published. They can also be found in the Library of the Calvet Museum in Avignon, in the Delandine manuscript 774, which reproduces the entire contents of the Lyons manuscript and several additional documents. Both manuscripts are from the eighteenth century. The one in Lyons is bound in parchment and consists of 286 pages measuring 260 by 90 millimeters.

The departmental archives of Vaucluse possess a quarto register of 37 pages, classified D 274, which contains 42 excerpts from letters of Saint Vincent, letters addressed for the most part to Superiors in Rome. This manuscript contains nothing that we do not know from other sources.

The Marseilles manuscript, as we call it because of its title: *Extraits des lettres de saint Vincent de Paul déposées dans les archives de la Mission de France à Marseille*, belongs to the Motherhouse of the Priests of the Mission. It is a simple notebook of 17 pages on which have been transcribed in roughly chronological order, probably shortly after the publication of Father Pémartin's work, 64 generally short fragments of letters addressed mainly to Firmin Get. It was impossible for us to locate the document that the copyist had in hand. The conformity of the verified text with excerpts of letters for which we possess the original guarantees its overall accuracy. Twenty of these fragments will be published here for the first time.

The Daughters of Charity of the parish of Saint-Paul in Paris possessed until 1814 a folio collection of eighty-eight pages written in the second half of the seventeenth century. It was entitled: *Extraits de Lettres de feu Monsieur Vincent et feu Mademoiselle Le Gras*. The letters of the Saint are represented by more than one hundred fragments, those of his spiritual daughter by only seven. The handwriting is not always the same; on page seven, we recognize that of Julienne Loret, one of the Foundress' principal collaborators. The excerpts are separated quite often by a small blank space or by a mere indentation. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish one from the other, and it could be that at one time or another, for lack of sufficient information, we have attached to one and the same letter extracts from different letters, or vice versa. In 1814 the manuscript was given to Dominique-François Hanon, Vicar General of the Congregation of the Mission. It has since gone to enrich the



archives of the Sisters' Motherhouse. We shall borrow from it about forty excerpts.

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In addition to the manuscript collections, there are printed ones and the old works that made extensive use of the Saint's correspondence. It is fitting to rank in first place the *Vie du Vénérable Serviteur de Dieu Vincent de Paul*<sup>29</sup> by Louis Abelly. A great number of Saint Vincent's letters are quoted or merely referred to by this first of his biographers. A few more than two hundred of them are mentioned, among which about one hundred appear in Father Pémarin's collection. Like most writers of his time, Abelly did not scruple touching up the texts he quoted under pretext of improving their style or making them clearer. Because the thought was respected, it was considered quite natural to remove the imperfections of an expression. Unfortunately, poor taste often rendered the expression more defective instead of improving it, and the thought, said to be untouched, suffered at times from these changes.

Abelly replaces words, inserts brief commentaries, and modifies sentence constructions. Beneath his pen "reputation" becomes "repute";<sup>30</sup> "good men," "respectable men";<sup>31</sup> "you have a thousand reasons," "you have every reason";<sup>32</sup> "merry fellows," "those who would be too free";<sup>33</sup> and "devout," "flourishing in godliness."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Paris, 1664, 3 vols. in 1 vol. We always refer to this edition because the other editors more or less altered Abelly's quotations.

<sup>30</sup>Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. III, chap. XXIV, sect. I, p. 348 and letter of August 6, 1657, to Honoré Bélart.

<sup>31</sup>Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. XII, p. 415 and letter of October 4, 1646, to Cardinal Grimaldi.

<sup>32</sup>Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. III, chap. XXII, end, p. 325 and the letter of June 27, 1660, to a Visitation nun.

<sup>33</sup>Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol II, chap. IX, p. 351 and letter of October 1658 to Saint Louise.

<sup>34</sup>Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. I, sect. II, par. 3, p. 31 and letter of July 25, 1634, to François du Coudray.

Abelly likes to emphasize the pious tone of the Saint's expressions. Thus he writes: "these holy days" instead of "these days";<sup>35</sup> "the most Blessed Sacrament" instead of "the Blessed Sacrament."<sup>36</sup>

Saint Vincent's conciseness sometimes seems to him an obstacle to clarity; Abelly remedies this by lengthening the sentence. Here are a few examples:

*Real text.* — "Oh surely, that is an illusion!"<sup>37</sup>

*Abelly.* — "Oh! surely, if you were to think that way, you would be greatly mistaken and it would be sheer illusion."<sup>38</sup>

*Real text.* — "They will go to judgment day with their heads held high."<sup>39</sup>

*Abelly.* — "But with what holy confidence they will appear on judgment day after having performed so many holy works of charity!"<sup>40</sup>

*Real text.* — "Have pity on us."<sup>41</sup>

*Abelly.* — "Therefore, have pity on us and come take us by the hand to draw us out of the evil state in which we are."<sup>42</sup>

Often enough the language of Vincent de Paul is more clever, more lively, more French than that attributed to him by his biographer. The Saint writes to Louise de Marillac: "Oh! what a tree you have appeared to be today in God's sight since you have borne such a fruit!"<sup>43</sup> We do not understand why Abelly substituted for those words the following: "Oh! how you have appeared today in God's sight like a beautiful tree, since, through His grace, you have borne

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<sup>35</sup>Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXIV, p. 113 and no. 138 to Saint Louise.

<sup>36</sup>Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. IX, p. 351 and no. 354 to Saint Louise.

<sup>37</sup>No. 69.

<sup>38</sup>Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. III, chap. VIII, sect. I, p. 77.

<sup>39</sup>No. 354.

<sup>40</sup>Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. IX, p. 350.

<sup>41</sup>Letter of July 25, 1634, to François du Coudray, no. 177.

<sup>42</sup>Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. I, sect. II, par. 3, p. 31.

<sup>43</sup>No. 27.

such a fruit!”<sup>44</sup> Saint Vincent continues: “May you be forever a beautiful tree of life bringing forth fruits of love!” Is that not better than: “I entreat Him, through His infinite goodness, to make of you forever a veritable tree of life which will produce fruits of true charity!” We read in a letter to François du Coudray: “Is everyone in good health? Is each one in good spirits?”<sup>45</sup> Abelly preferred: “Is each one in good health and quite content?”<sup>46</sup>

Some textual changes result from mistakes in reading. It is doubtless because he was not able to decipher Saint Vincent’s handwriting that the first biographer read *songez* [dream] for *soyez* [be].<sup>47</sup>

Among the thirty fragments, approximately, whose texts we have been able to check, there is not one given to us completely intact. Several are even almost unrecognizable<sup>48</sup> because they have undergone so many modifications.

In his *Vie de saint Vincent de Paul*, Pierre Collet also makes frequent use of the Saint’s writings. He cites or makes reference to more than 250 letters. His quotations, less frequent and generally less extensive than those of Abelly, are almost all found in the first biographer, often enough with the same alterations.<sup>49</sup> When he has recourse directly to the original, it is not for the purpose of quoting it verbatim. Nevertheless, he is perhaps less free with the text than Abelly.

In 1834, Gossin, a lawyer at the royal court of Paris,

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<sup>44</sup>Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXIII, p. 105.

<sup>45</sup>Letter of September 15, 1628, no. 30.

<sup>46</sup>Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. I, sect. I, par. 4, p. 18.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. I, chap. XXIV, p. 113, and no. 71.

<sup>48</sup>Compare in particular Abelly, vol. II, chap. I, sect. VII, par. I, p. 96, and the letter of September 6, 1646, to Brother Jean Barreau; vol. III, chap. VIII, sect. I, p. 77, and no. 69; vol. III, chap. VIII, sect. II, p. 83, and no. 50.

<sup>49</sup>Compare Abelly, vol. III, chap. XXIV, sect. I, p. 348, Collet, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 308, and the letter of August 6, 1657, to Honoré Bélart; Abelly, vol. III, chap. II, towards the end, p. 8, Collet, vol. II, p. 107, and the letter of February 7, 1641, to Saint Louise.

published from the originals, in a book entitled *Saint Vincent de Paul peint par ses écrits*,<sup>50</sup> seventy-six letters of the Saint — the majority addressed to Louise de Marillac — and one petition to the Parlement. He retains the original spelling, places the dated letters in chronological order, and gives the names of those who own the manuscripts he used. Although quite incomplete, this work would be excellent if the author had been better able to read Saint Vincent's handwriting. The proper names in particular are completely changed. Who would recognize Goussault, Laurent, Souscarrières, de Herse, Mussot, Romilly, Fortia, de Brou, Pascal, Pillé, and d'Authier in the names Toustain, Lunveni, Souharries, Bierse, Mussut, Clomilly, Foren, Bron, Fasral, Filé and Autin? Who would not be surprised to read in the Saint's correspondence sentences such as this: *Faites . . . bien entendre . . . à votre tour que je suis en témoin de Notre-Seigneur* [Make it quite clear in your turn that I am like a witness of Our Lord]?<sup>51</sup> Replace *tour* with *coeur*, *témoin* with *l'amour*, and you will have what the Saint wrote [Make it quite clear to your heart that I am, in the love of Our Lord . . .]. However numerous these reading errors may be, it is almost always easy for anyone who is familiar with Saint Vincent's style and history to reconstruct the true text. Gossin has done a fine and useful piece of work. Our collection is indebted to him for several letters which we have not found anywhere else.

Scarcely had he been elected Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission than Father Jean-Baptiste Etienne realized that it was his duty to place at the disposition of the Missionaries and the Daughters of Charity the conferences and writings of Saint Vincent, so that, better instructed by this reading of their Holy Founder's teachings,

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<sup>50</sup>Paris.

<sup>51</sup>This is no. 207a in our collection.

they might be filled more perfectly with his spirit and conform their behavior more closely to his. In 1844 he had facsimiles made of a quarto collection of 585 pages: *Collection des conférences de saint Vincent, de plusieurs de ses lettres et de quelques conférences de M. Alméras*. All of these letters except one were selected from the Saint's correspondence with his Missionaries. There are seventy-one of them, arranged in no particular order. More often than not, they are only excerpts.

The following year, 126 letters, more or less complete, appeared in a work published in Paris under the title: *Conférences spirituelles tenues pour les Filles de la Charité par saint Vincent de Paul*.<sup>52</sup>

This publication was followed ten years later by the *Recueil des diverses Exhortations et Lettres de saint Vincent aux Missionnaires*, which contains facsimiles of nearly seven hundred letters or letter fragments. Here again the editor was not guided by any historical concern: no notes, no chronological order, a text quite frequently altered and therefore flawed, at times composite letters which appear unified but in reality are composed of sentences taken from different letters. A collection of this kind serves its purpose, but it could not be sufficient. The letters of Saint Vincent are not only food for piety; they are also historical documents. Scholars were praying for a comprehensive compilation of complete letters, faithfully reproduced and classified in the only order suitable to history — chronological order.

A compatriot of the Saint, Father Jean-Baptiste Pémartin, Secretary General of the Congregation of the Mission, resolved to undertake this work himself in spite of the numerous demands of his office. He collected 2039 letters<sup>53</sup> which

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<sup>52</sup>Paris.

<sup>53</sup>We say 2039 letters, although the last one is numbered 2078, because the editor mixes in with the Saint's letters eight documents which are not his (5, 7, 286, 341, 945, 1014, 1370, 1947); he repeats twelve letters (compare 186 plus 187 and 864, 334 and 492, 469 and 480, 671

fill four octavo volumes printed in Paris in 1880 by Pillet et Dumoulin.

The *Lettres de saint Vincent de Paul* enjoyed a well-deserved success among this great Saint's two religious families for whom the work was exclusively intended. It became known and desired by others, and it was in response to the many requests addressed to him that Father Pémartin chose 860 letters from among those he had just published and made them available to the public in 1882.<sup>54</sup>

The 1880 work presupposes considerable research and indicates significant progress over previous collections. Nonetheless, it exhibits many lacunae and a great many inaccuracies.

The discovery of new documents makes it possible today to complete or correct letters taken from less complete or less reliable sources. The dates attributed by Father Pémartin to the undated letters of Saint Vincent are more often than not incorrect. In our time, it is required, and rightly so, that the dates, words, and sentences added by the editor to incomplete texts taken from documents damaged by moths, humidity, or a tear be placed in brackets. In the 1880 collection nothing distinguishes them.

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and 1966, 375 and 922, 179 and 932, 83 and 1130, 1467 and 1936, 722 and 1994, 659 and 1995, 472 and 2065, 1213 and 1240); and with fragments of sixteen others he makes thirty-four distinct letters (348, 350 and 351 belong to one and the same letter; likewise 46 and 117, 172 and 173, 24 and 322, 357 and 359, 389 and 390, 186 and 187, 704 and 713, 170 and 769, 845 and 1010, 677, 876 and 877, 1347 and 1589, 958 and 1049, 1023 and 1026, 1046 and 1047, 1999 and 2001). Let us add that the petition published by Father Pémartin as no. 825 was disclaimed by Saint Vincent, and for that reason should not appear among his letters.

The editor did well not to insert in his collection the letter that Canon Maynard (*Saint Vincent de Paul* [3rd ed., Paris, 1886], vol. I, p. 83) attributes without grounds to the Saint who has recently left Clichy to enter the De Gondi Family: "I departed sadly from my little church of Clichy, my eyes bathed with tears," the holy priest is supposed to have written, "and I blessed the men and women who came to me and whom I had so loved. My poor were there, too, and they broke my heart. I arrived in Paris with my scant furnishings and went to the house of M. de Bérulle." The style of this excerpt is far from resembling that of Saint Vincent. Moreover, Maynard, who is the only one to bring it to our attention, gives no reference for it whatever.

<sup>54</sup>*Lettres de saint Vincent de Paul*, Paris, Dumoulin, 2 vols.

The annotation is not plentiful enough. The reader would like to know whether the text followed by the editor is an original, a draft, or a copy; and, when it is an original, whether the writing is the Saint's or that of his secretaries. It would be desirable to tell him, by indicating crossed-out words or by giving different drafts when any can be found, through what successive stages the Saint's thought or expression has passed. A word of explanation concerning the events or the individuals mentioned in the letters would help him to be better acquainted with the milieu in which Saint Vincent de Paul lived and, at times, to better understand the meaning of his sentence.

The 1880 collection would have profited by being conceived according to a more comprehensive plan. There are letters of Saint Vincent whose text we do not know, but Abelly, Collet, or others give us a summary of their contents; why not mention them? Why not accompany the letters he wrote by those he received? The latter shed light on the former.

Finally, research patiently pursued has brought about fruitful discoveries. Father Pémartin wrote in his preface: "However incomplete this collection may be when compared to what has perished, no means of enriching it have been neglected, and there is very little chance of adding to it hereafter in any appreciable way." A rash statement, for it is already possible to add several hundred unpublished letters to his collection.

A supplement to Saint Vincent's letters published in 1888 contains more than one hundred new ones.<sup>55</sup> A few un-

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<sup>55</sup>*Lettres et Conférences de saint Vincent de Paul (Supplément)*, Paris. The first letter in the *Supplément* is numbered 2079; the last is 3136. Nevertheless, we fall short of having 1057 letters. The editor absentmindedly passes from number 2099 to number 3000. Let us add that six documents are not letters (2128, 3005, 3046, 3065, 3107, 3131); twelve letters are already found in the 1880 collection (cf. 2082 and 132, 2084 and 231, 2094 and 1627, 2091 and 116, 3018 and 46 plus 117, 3042 and 840, 3035 and 450, 3054 and 952, 3077 and 133, 3089 and

published letters, most often copied from the originals, appeared around 1889 in a facsimile collection composed exclusively of letters from the Saint to Louise de Marillac, about 318 in number.<sup>56</sup> Excerpts from letters, all taken from Father Pémartin's work and relating to the Foundress or the Sisters' works, are added as an appendix. Sister de Geoffre, a Daughter of Charity to whom this work was entrusted, worked at it intelligently and with a will, and it is but just to say that she accomplished it successfully.

After forty years, it seems the time has come to take up again the work of Father Pémartin in order to give it broader scope, more order, greater accuracy, and to adjust it to the requirements of modern criticism.

Keeping the spelling of the documents would have presented, it seems to us, more drawbacks than advantages. We have preferred to modernize it so as to facilitate the reading of the work for the public and to avoid the variety of spellings that exist between the letters written by Saint Vincent and by his secretaries, and between the originals and copies of them. About half the letters which form this collection are taken from copyists from the end of the seventeenth century or later. Why should we retain their spelling which is neither that of the original nor our own? For reasons of uniformity and clarity, the most recent editors of Bossuet's correspondence were led to lay aside the great orator's spelling; we shall imitate them.

The letters of Saint Vincent will be followed by his conferences, and the conferences by the principal documents relating to his life and his institutions. The work we are undertaking is considerable. We hope that it will be of

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1570, 3110 and 1681, 3117 and 1968); and eight letters are merely complementary fragments of letters partially published in this same collection (2092 and 66, 3027 and 396, 3028 and 408, 3031 and 420, 3047 and 610, 3102 and 1326, 3104 and 1340, 3127 and 2072).

<sup>56</sup>*Lettres de saint Vincent de Paul adressées à Mademoiselle Le Gras.*



assistance: first of all, to scholars who will find in these pages a great deal of new information; to the Saint's future biographers whom it will spare long and often futile research; and finally, to our readers, for Saint Vincent is one of those men whom we esteem and love more when we know them more intimately. Now, when we esteem him and love him, do we not already feel drawn to imitate him?

PIERRE COSTE, C.M.

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

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In mid-December of 1973, Father James W. Richardson, C.M., the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, met with the Provincial Superiors or Visitors of the Congregation's Provinces in the United States and requested a new and complete translation into English of all the extant works of Saint Vincent, which, in effect, meant the translation into modern American English of the fourteen-volume work of Pierre Coste, C.M., *Saint Vincent de Paul, Correspondance, Entretien, Documents* and a collection of 144 letters and two conference outlines unknown to Coste and published by André Dodin, C.M., in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20. Selected letters of Saint Vincent and his conferences to both the Daughters of Charity and the Priests of the Mission had been made available in English through the labors of Father Joseph Leonard, C.M.,<sup>1</sup> but the English-speaking world still awaited access to the entire wealth of material found in Coste's work.

In requesting this translation, Father Richardson was following a long-standing tradition of concern on the part of

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Leonard, C.M., *Letters of Saint Vincent de Paul* (London: Burns Oates Washbourne, 1937); *The Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul to the Sisters of Charity* (London: Burns Oates Washbourne, 1938-1940); *Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul*, compiled by Pierre Coste, C.M., trans. by Joseph Leonard, C.M., ed. by the Eastern Province of the Congregation of the Mission (Philadelphia, 1963).

Vincentian Superiors to place the writings of their Holy Founder at the disposition of all the Missionaries and the Daughters of Charity so that "they might be filled more perfectly with his spirit and conform their behavior more closely to his." It is hoped that the translation of this work, "rich in teaching, sparkling with humor, and without a single banal line — a unique thing in a collection of this kind"<sup>2</sup> — will now afford the English-speaking segment of the Double Family<sup>3</sup> a broader and deeper understanding of the genius of Saint Vincent de Paul and will also be a means of introducing him to others who remain unaware of his spirituality and manifold works of charity.

The ultimate implementation of the Translation Project, as the undertaking became known, was entrusted to Father Cecil Parres, C.M., with Father Joseph I. Dirvin, C.M., designated as Editor-in-Chief. The provinces of the Daughters of Charity were immediately invited to participate in the work and Sister Eleanor McNabb, D.C., joined Fathers Parres and Dirvin to form the first Publishing Board. This group ably laid the groundwork and oversaw the first steps of the infant project, from the organization of the technical details to the gathering of funds. In 1975, Father James R. King, C.M., was appointed Executive Assistant to Father Dirvin and has, since that time, contributed a variety of expertise to the work.

From 1974 to 1980, the translation, as projected in its initial stages, underwent several changes both with regard to the scope of the endeavor and the method of accomplishing it. The initiators of the work envisaged only a simple render-

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<sup>2</sup>Henri Bremond, *A Literary History of Religious Thought From the Wars of Religion Down to our Own Times*, trans. K. L. Montgomery, 10 vols. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; New York: Macmillan Co., 1936), vol. III: *The Triumph of Mysticism*, p. 212.

<sup>3</sup>The two Communities founded by Saint Vincent de Paul: the Priests of the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul.

ing into English of Coste's work and that of Dodin. They intended an entirely fresh edition translated from the original with no dependence on any previous publication. Volunteer translators recruited from the Double Family were to produce an exact translation of the original with a special review board checking the translation for accuracy. Editorial teams would then couch the text in modern American English while striving to preserve the style and flavor of the original correspondent. The Editorial Board directing the project would make the final review and determination of the manuscript for publication.

In 1976, after two years of organizing, recruiting volunteer translators and editors, and establishing a sufficient financial footing, the Editorial Board decided to publish first of all the work of Dodin, *Mission et Charité*. Several reasons prompted this decision: 1.) the material had not been previously translated; 2.) the volume was short and could be done more quickly than the others; 3.) the amount assigned to any one translator would be small; 4.) it was hoped that participants in the project might feel a sense of achievement in the early stages of the work; and 5.) it was hoped that the appearance of this first volume would encourage interest in the project among members of the Double Family of Saint Vincent. Therefore, in the Fall of 1976, about forty translators throughout the United States received as their first assignment several letters from *Mission et Charité* and the work began in earnest. The publication date set for this section was 1977.

Meanwhile, comments, suggestions, and events were paving the way for major changes in the original plan. The advisability of translating the more than fifty-year old Coste edition without updating the scholarship was called into question. Writings found even more recently than those published in *Mission et Charité* had come to light as well as more complete or more correct versions of letters already

appearing in Coste. It was suggested that the letters appearing in Dodin's work be placed chronologically within the existing volumes of Coste and not be isolated in a separate volume. At the same time, Sister Helen Marie Law, D.C.,<sup>4</sup> had been invited to join the Project. By July of 1976, Sister had already translated on her own the majority of Coste's first eight volumes and the question arose of how best to use her work.

Each of these elements was discussed and carefully considered. As early as May 1976, steps were taken to obtain editors capable of updating the scholarship of the Coste edition. In October 1977, a Priest of the Mission, Father John W. Carven, agreed to serve in this capacity and in May 1978 he was specifically assigned to the work.

At a meeting on March 26, 1977, the Editorial Board agreed, as part of the general editing process, to follow the recommendation concerning the insertion of Dodin's material within the chronology of Coste's volumes. However, the members still felt that there were advantages to publishing an inexpensive but attractive translation of the Dodin volume. It was not until October of the same year that the focus shifted to publishing several of Coste's volumes, primarily because of the great cost reduction, and no further mention was made of printing *Mission et Charité* as an isolated volume.

Although the original conception of the project envisioned a totally new translation done by recruited volunteers, the Editorial Board decided in 1977 to use Sister Helen Marie Law's work as the basic translation for Coste's volumes. Her work was judged highly accurate, although

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<sup>4</sup>Sister Helen Marie Law, having previously translated into English the letters of Saint Louise de Marillac, brought a certain expertise to the translation of Saint Vincent's writings. Her great contribution to the study of Saint Vincent was brought to an end by her untimely death on July 3, 1978.

certainly susceptible to editing. Use would also be made, especially to clarify difficult passages, of the translation of Father Joseph Leonard, C.M. The Board then decided to enlist the services of a full-time French-language scholar to review and, where necessary, to emend Sister's entire work. In 1978, a Daughter of Charity, Sister John Marie Poole, was assigned to carry out this service, part-time at first and then full time.

By October 1977, the concept of the simple translation had expanded to the creation of a totally new edition based on a thorough revision of Sister Helen Marie Law's translation. The work would represent as complete a canon as possible of Saint Vincent's writings and, for that purpose, a serious effort would be made to seek out unpublished documents from any source available. The material found in *Mission et Charité* and the *Annales*, as well as any new items discovered would be inserted chronologically within the volumes of Coste. And, finally, a history scholar would update all the information contained in the footnotes and final index. Two further decisions in 1980 provided each volume with a biographical index which incorporated terms and places, thereby making each volume self-contained.

Optimism seemed in order as the project proceeded through 1978 and into 1979 with one person working full time on the translation and another, on a part-time basis, reviewing the footnotes. However, the euphoria was short-lived: as 1979 moved into 1980, neither member of the work force was able to devote full-time attention to the project. This lack of consistent application to the task, the consequent slowdown of the work, and the enormity of the undertaking as envisioned in 1977 brought about a revision of the project goals. On May 13, 1980, the Vincentian Provincials altered the 1977 decision and decided to follow through with a full English translation of only the letters, that is, of the first eight volumes of Coste including the new material

found in Dodin and other sources and with updated annotation. Upon completion of the letters, a further determination would be made concerning the six remaining volumes.

In 1980, Father Carven and Sister John Marie Poole, who had been working on the translation since 1978, were both assigned full time to the project. Once again the work progressed and the prospects for publication appeared hopeful. During the next four years, the project passed through various high and low periods. An unforeseen change of personnel slowed down the work considerably, as did the necessity of fully developing and refining the detailed aspects of the editing process, which at this point in time had never gone beyond the first check for accuracy.

Now, at last, in 1985, we are able to offer the first volume of this new edition of Saint Vincent's letters to the English-speaking world. To the 416 letters which appeared in Coste's original volume I, we have added twenty-six letters, three of which have never before been published.<sup>5</sup> Twenty-four letters from *Mission et Charité* have been inserted: nineteen are completely new to the volume<sup>6</sup> and the other five provide more complete and/or more correct versions of letters already in Coste.<sup>7</sup> Three letters, also new to volume I, have been drawn from Coste's supplements in volumes VIII<sup>8</sup> and XIII,<sup>9</sup> which also offered more complete and correct versions of three other letters.<sup>10</sup> One letter was discovered in the *Annales*<sup>11</sup> and another<sup>12</sup> in an article concerning the adoption of an Apostolic Visitor in the Visitation

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<sup>5</sup>Nos. 115a, 156a, 377a.

<sup>6</sup>Nos. 39a, 45a, 45b, 55a, 55b, 57a, 102a, 163a, 188a, 260a, 260b, 260c, 297a, 322a, 362a, 365a, 374a, 392a, 414a.

<sup>7</sup>Nos. 47, 65, 83, 413, 414.

<sup>8</sup>No. 47a.

<sup>9</sup>Nos. 253a and 383a.

<sup>10</sup>Nos. 169-170, 247, 348.

<sup>11</sup>No. 94a.

<sup>12</sup>No. 388a.

Community. Research to date has uncovered ten more unpublished letters and approximately seven documents which will be inserted chronologically in the appropriate volumes in addition to the remaining 117 items in *Mission et Charité* and the other twenty-six letters published by Coste in his supplements. It is hoped that still more of Saint Vincent's writings will be found as work on the project progresses so that the present edition will truly represent the most complete collection of the Saint's work ever published.

Besides the letters newly inserted in volume I, seventeen letters have been relocated within the volume,<sup>13</sup> either because of corrections given by Coste himself in his volumes VIII and XIII or due to discoveries permitting more accurate dating. In such cases, the original number of the letter has been left with the title of the letter and an indication has been given as to its new placement. The citation found at the new location gives the rationale for the change that has been made.

In placing new letters within the volume or changing the placement of letters we have relied on Coste's corrections given in volumes VIII and XIII, the listings found in the *Annales*,<sup>14</sup> the dates on recently discovered letters or, in the absence of a date, on internal evidence. To facilitate research in Coste's work, we have chosen to keep the letter numbers of the original volumes and to indicate material newly added or relocated within each volume by adding a, b, c, etc., to the number of the preceding item. We have also decided to adhere to the span of years assigned by Coste for each volume.

In some cases, the finding of an original has enabled us to join fragments formerly considered separate letters. Such combined letters have been assigned a single number fol-

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<sup>13</sup>Nos. 60a, 74a, 156a, 198a-g, 296a, 207a-c, 277a, 290a, 344a.

<sup>14</sup>*Annales* (1937), pp. 234-237.



lowed by a letter to differentiate the whole from the segments as published in the original Coste volume. Where variations of a single letter exist, only the most correct version has been included in the volume. Likewise, although Coste chose to publish letters originally written in Latin both in that language and in French, the present edition bears only the English translation of the original Latin.

Three different types of letters are presented in these volumes: letters *from* Saint Vincent, letters *to* Saint Vincent and, at times, mere summaries of letters where the existence of a letter is known but no text is available. The letters written by Saint Vincent appear in regular type, while those addressed to him are printed in italics. Smaller type has been used to differentiate the summaries.

As Coste states in his introduction, almost all the letters we now possess are either in Saint Vincent's handwriting or in that of one of his secretaries. The term *original autograph* found in the citation of a letter indicates that the manuscript was written entirely in the Saint's hand. If the citation uses the term *signed letter*, the manuscript was written by a secretary and signed by the Saint. For some letters only a facsimile, a handwritten copy, a photocopy, or a photograph is known. Such indications are given in the citation of the letters for which this information is available.

The citations usually state as well the actual location of the manuscript or copy used for the present edition. Great care has been taken to verify these locations where possible. Letters drawn from other publications and those belonging to special collections, private or museum, have not been checked due to the near impossibility of such a task. However, an attempt has been made to verify all letters belonging to private houses of the Daughters of Charity, the Priests of the Mission, other religious houses, churches, and various religious institutions. In volume I, the whereabouts of fifty-nine letters have been checked and the citations corrected

where necessary. As a rule, no explanation has been given concerning these changes — the present location has merely been inserted. In the process of checking these locations and in the search for unpublished letters, we have at times been fortunate enough to locate the originals of letters for which only copies were known formerly. In these instances as well no mention has been made of the correction — the citation simply states that the manuscript is an original.

We have updated as well the department names given in the footnotes. Several departments have had name changes since the time of Coste, while two others have been subdivided.<sup>15</sup>

Although the project has undergone many delays, each has contributed in some way to the overall quality of the work. The appearance, in 1983, of the revised edition of Saint Louise de Marillac's writings<sup>16</sup> has permitted us to check her letters to Saint Vincent and her spiritual writings for any corrections which may have come to light. We have also adjusted all the footnote references to the appropriate indication as given in the new edition.

In any work of translation the question of style invariably arises, so it was not strange that we should be faced with the problem. Should we smooth out clumsy or elliptical phrasing in the interest of producing a more "readable" translation or should we preserve the roughness and stylistic crudities of the original in order to reflect the flavor and spontaneous quality of Saint Vincent's expression, supplying explanations where needed to make the sense clear? As

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<sup>15</sup>*Department* is the term used to designate each of the principal divisions of French territory. It denotes a geographical area similar to that of the American *state*. In the names of several departments, the word *maritime*, indicating *near the sea*, has replaced the word *inférieure* of the same meaning: Charente-Maritime, Seine-Maritime, Alpes-Maritime. In 1964, the Department of Seine was subdivided into Hauts-de-Seine, Paris, Seine-Saint-Denis, and Val-de-Marne; Seine-et-Oise became Essonne, Val-d'Oise, and Yvelines.

<sup>16</sup>*Sainte Louise de Marillac. Ecrits Spirituels* (Tours: Mame, 1983).

our response to this question, we have attempted to make our translation as "readable" as possible while adhering closely to the style of each correspondent. For that purpose we have made an effort to give as literal a meaning as we could to the expressions used, while still adapting them to modern terminology. We have tried to reproduce even the grammatical constructions used by each correspondent unless the true meaning of the sentence would suffer thereby. Very long sentences have been shortened and short phrases joined together to render thoughts more readily intelligible, though still preserving the sense of the original. The vocabulary and expression has deliberately been kept simple. Saint Vincent's love for and practice of simplicity are no secret to anyone familiar with his life; therefore, it was judged fitting to follow his own simplicity in the choice of words and style unless he himself opted for more elegant forms.

To retain the French atmosphere of the work we have left certain terms and expressions in the original French. General terms of greeting such as *Monsieur, Madame, etc.*, have not been translated, nor have we attempted an English version for expressions such as *O mon Dieu!*, *O Jésus!* Landholding titles which often form part of a proper name — *Comte, Duc, Marquis* — have also been left in French. Other titles have been translated by the closest English equivalent possible. Proper names are given in the original language unless there is a familiar English form. This holds true for both people and places. Therefore, *Sainte Jeanne-Françoise Frémiot de Chantal* has been rendered as *Saint Jane Frances Frémiot de Chantal*, whereas *Pierre Séguier* remains in French. For places, *Brittany* is used instead of *Bretagne*, while *Granada, Villeneuve*, and similar names remain in the original language. Proper foreign names within the text of the manuscripts have been left as written by the correspondents. However, the footnotes and index

present the name in its original language form — *Alessandro* Bichi for *Alexandre* Bichi; *Giovanni Francesco Guidi di Bagno* for *Jean-François Bagni*.

An attempt has been made to standardize name variations appearing in the original manuscripts: *Gondi* is always used in this edition although the form *Gondy* is often seen in the manuscripts. We have, however, left the variations *Pollalion* and *Poulaillon*. Although the correct spelling is the former, Saint Vincent always wrote the latter.

We have also standardized the various forms of the phrase used by Saint Vincent after his signature: *unworthy priest of the Congregation of the Mission*. Throughout this edition the abbreviation *i.s.C.M.* (*indignus sacerdos Congregationis Missionis*) has been used.

The word *fille*, meaning girl, daughter, young woman, appears in many of the manuscripts. In the seventeenth century, this word also denoted a woman religious or nun. We have tried to adjust the meaning of *fille* to the context of the various letters and have sometimes rendered the word as *Sister* rather than *Daughter* when referring to a member of Saint Louise's nascent community.

Monetary terms — *livre, écu, etc.* — have not been translated for it would be difficult to assign them an equivalent value in modern currency. Several other words and phrases have likewise been left in French — *Parlement, Chambre des Comptes, collège* — since English has no corresponding institution. These terms have been explained in footnotes. For other words of foreign origin used in English and found in English dictionaries no explanation has been given, for example, *faubourg*.

Saint Vincent often makes use of scriptural references which, however, are not always direct quotes. Where he has done so, the translation has been adjusted to flow with the meaning of the sentence. The scriptural quotations given in the footnotes are usually taken from the *New American*

*Bible*, unless a passage cannot be found in that edition or a more suitable rendering of the phrase is found elsewhere. In such instances, the *Douay-Rheims Bible* has been used. In the case of the psalms, both versions have been cited because of the variations.

Coste almost always refers to Vincent de Paul as Saint Vincent or the Saint. In the present edition we have added this title to the names of Louise de Marillac and any other individual who has been canonized since Coste's time.

Generally speaking, in the titles of the letters, Coste gave the location of the addressee only when he was sure of it and when the locality was outside the then city of Paris. We have continued this practice and have attempted to make it more consistent. We have also followed Coste's custom of placing within brackets dates that are uncertain or conjectural. Brackets have also been used to indicate words either missing from the manuscript or inserted by the editors.

The capitalization forms of the original manuscripts have been adjusted to American usage as has the punctuation. Number forms — words versus figures — follow common American practice as well.

In addition to our goal of producing a smooth English translation which is faithful insofar as possible to the meaning and style of the original French, we have also purposed to present a work which is interesting and informative with regard to Saint Vincent, his correspondents, and his times. Both the scholar who may wish to use this work as a research tool and the ordinary reader who may be unfamiliar with the Double Family and the religio-political history of the period have been kept in mind. A great effort has been made to update, correct, and amplify Coste's footnote material. Irrelevant notes have been eliminated and new annotation added whenever this has been deemed necessary or helpful. In the case of new matter, no indication has been

given to distinguish Coste's footnotes from the annotation added by our editor.

A biographical sketch of each personage has been supplied throughout the work the first time that he or she appears in a volume. To facilitate reference to this data and also to the explanations of terms and places given throughout the text an index has been added to each book. The index indicates the number of the letter to which the reader should refer for the information sought. A general index will also be provided as an appendix to the entire work.

All references in the indices and the footnotes have been given by citing the volume and the number of the item rather than the page. Since Coste's volume span and his numbering of items have been retained, this practice should facilitate research in both his edition and the present translation.

In order to enjoy these volumes more thoroughly, the reader would do well to keep in mind that, as now, so then, one correspondent did not spell out to the other details that were already known and understood by both. Reading these letters at a distance of some three hundred years will often arouse a curiosity which in many cases must remain unsatisfied. The allusions made will not always be clear, nor can they be. However, a familiarity beforehand with the life of Saint Vincent will greatly aid one's knowledge and understanding of the situations mentioned and the people involved. The three-volume definitive biography written by Coste<sup>17</sup> provides extensive information, but many shorter versions of the Saint's life can be found. Placed against such a background, these writings take on still more a life of their own and make the Saint vividly present once again. The

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<sup>17</sup>Pierre Coste, C.M., *The Life and Works of Saint Vincent de Paul*, trans. Joseph Leonard, C.M., 3 vols. (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1952).

twinkle in his eyes and the smile or tenderness in his voice seep through the words and we meet the delightful, charming man known to his contemporaries. The severe, ascetic Saint takes on a new personality and somehow becomes more human.

This man of myriad occupations and enormous correspondence writes to Saint Louise and understandably so: "Last night I found this letter that I thought I had sent to you; I wrote it three days ago."<sup>18</sup> And to one of his Missionaries, Robert de Sergis, he says: "I received your letter four days ago, but I lost it and cannot remember everything you wrote."<sup>19</sup>

Women of our day will delight in hearing him tell Saint Louise: "Experience has shown that it is absolutely necessary for the women not to depend on the men in this situation, especially for the money;" and then ask, surely with a little bit of mischievousness: "Well now, is that not a consolation to you, Mademoiselle? After that, will you say that you are of no use to the world?"<sup>20</sup>

The warmth and tenderness of his expression often take us by surprise. Saint Louise, his Missionaries, the friends who both supported him and enjoyed his spiritual guidance were often the recipients of his affectionate words. "You know how much my heart treasures your own . . . ,"<sup>21</sup> he writes to one of his Missionaries. And, to Saint Louise, both tenderly and teasingly he remarks: "I am not asking you to remember me in your prayers, because I have no doubt that, after little Le Gras, you put me in first place."<sup>22</sup>

Saint Vincent writes as though he enjoys the task, giving unusual twists to his phrases and adapting his usual closing

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<sup>18</sup>No. 276.

<sup>19</sup>No. 377.

<sup>20</sup>No. 42.

<sup>21</sup>No. 365.

<sup>22</sup>No. 266.

in an astonishing variety of forms: "I have never been more busy or more your servant, in the love of Our Lord."<sup>23</sup>

The lyrical beauty of some passages changes his prose into exquisite poetry and we question our vision of a rough Gascon peasant: "Surely, Mademoiselle, a truly humble spirit humbles itself as much amid honors as amid insults, acting like the honeybee which makes its honey equally as well from the dew that falls on the wormwood as from that which falls on the rose."<sup>24</sup>

Let us not fail to seek the man beyond these words, the man of compassion, warmth, humor, savoir faire, authority, and, most of all, the mystic whose sanctity was carved amid the bustle and involvement of very human situations. He will give us hope that we, too, can find holiness in an ordinary, busy life. May this personal acquaintance with the real Vincent de Paul lead us to encounter the dynamic force behind his life, Jesus Christ, Who, for him, was all things.

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<sup>23</sup>No. 357.

<sup>24</sup>No. 58.





Et toy luy, pour me dire de l'Amour, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour /  
comme n'est fait, quand en moy, amy de la maison, le monde est digne de me dire /  
Cant d'icele, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour /  
La femme du monde, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour /  
Et n'est-ce pas, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour /  
que je vous aime, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour /  
est de la maison, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour /  
Sage, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour /  
deux d'icele, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour /  
je vous aime, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour /  
Je ne puis point être Monsieur, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour /  
reunions, que j'aimerois, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour /  
me donne, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour /  
et pour de vous, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour /  
que je vous aime, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour /  
to me dire, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour /  
trin et par par, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour /  
vive, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour /  
peu me réunir, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour, / N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour

Monsieur

En quinze et six JUILLET 1607

N'est-il en toy, que pour me dire de l'Amour /  
Où luy

Paul de



# SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

## CORRESPONDENCE

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### 1. - TO MONSIEUR DE COMET, IN DAX

Monsieur,

One might have thought two years ago, judging by the appearance of the favorable progress of my affairs that, contrary to my deserts, fortune was endeavoring only to make me more en-

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**Letter 1.** - The original autograph letter, written in a fine, compact hand, covers three pages. Its history is well worth knowing. Along with the original of the letter that follows, it passed from the hands of M. de Comet to those of Catherine de Comet, wife of Jean de Saint-Martin. Their son, Saint-Martin d'Agès, found them in 1658 as he was going through the family papers. Pleased with his discovery, he took them to Canon de Saint-Martin, his uncle, a close friend of the Saint. The good canon thought that Monsieur Vincent would be very pleased to read these pages and immediately had a copy made for his illustrious friend. The copies did not remain in Vincent's hands for long. After reading them, he burned them. By lifting the veil hiding two years of his youth, at once the most tragic and the most glorious, the revelation of these documents was of a nature to wound his deep humility. His letter of thanks was also one of supplication in which he begged M. de Saint-Martin to send him the originals. Brother Ducourneau, his secretary, who was doing the writing, warned the Canon of Dax of the danger threatening the precious manuscripts if they were to fall into the Saint's hands. He advised him to send them to Jean Watebled, Superior of the Collège des Bons-Enfants, which he did. (Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. IV, p. 17.)

Jean Watebled shared the letters with Antoine Portail. René Alméras, Thomas Berthe, Jean Dehorgny, Brother Ducourneau, and probably others studied them. No need to describe their astonishment and joy; these pages were a revelation for them. This was in August 1658. Brother Ducourneau hastened to thank Canon de Saint-Martin, and the Saint waited a long time for the originals he had requested. On March 18, 1660, feeling that his end was near, he renewed his plea in a letter which we shall publish further on.

The two letters to M. de Comet remained in the archives of Saint-Lazare until 1789 or 1791. They were either stolen at the time of the looting or confiscated two years later with the rest of the estate. How did the first of these letters come into the hands of Pelletier de Saint-Fargeau, and then become the property of his colleague, Carnot? We have no idea. On January 31, 1854, it appeared in a sale of autographs along with a few other letters of Saint Vincent and several outlines of sermons and speeches for the meetings of the Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu.

vied than imitated;<sup>1</sup> but alas! it was only to make of me an example of her vicissitudes and inconstancy, changing her favor into disfavor and her good luck into misfortune.

You may have heard, Monsieur, since you are well acquainted with my affairs, how I found, on my return from Bordeaux,<sup>2</sup> a will drawn up in my favor by a good old woman from Toulouse. Her property consisted of some furniture and some land that the bipartite court of Castres<sup>3</sup> had awarded to her in place of three or four hundred écus<sup>4</sup> owed to her by a wicked rogue. In order to obtain part of it, I set out for the place to sell the goods, as was recommended by my best friends and by my need for money to meet the debts I had contracted and the great expense I foresaw as proper for me to make in the pursuit of the affair that my temerity does not allow me to mention.<sup>5</sup>

On my arrival, I found out that the fox had left the locality because the good woman had a warrant out for his arrest for the

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In May of that same year, it is listed in one of Laverdet's catalogues as coming from the collection of M. de la Bouisse-Rochefort and priced at five hundred francs. Laverdet exchanged it for some manuscripts of Montesquieu. Shortly afterwards we find it in Fontenay-le-Comte, in the autograph collection of Madame Joseph Fillon. Benjamin Fillon gave it to the Daughters of Charity working in the hospital of Fontenay, where it remained for many years, carefully preserved in an expensive album. When the hospital closed in 1979, the letter was added to the collection of the Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, 140 rue du Bac, Paris. Abelly did not reproduce it in its entirety; he omitted passages that seemed to him unworthy of a saint, among others, those which might have given rise to the suspicion that Saint Vincent believed in alchemy. Firmin Joussemet, Madame Fillon's nephew, published it in its unabridged form in 1856 in the *Revue des provinces de l'Ouest*.

The recipient of the letter was M. de Comet the younger. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. IV, P. 14.) We are using *Comet* and not *Commet* to conform to the spelling used by the Saint and by the members of the Comet family.

<sup>1</sup>At that time Saint Vincent was successfully directing a well-attended boarding school in Toulouse.

<sup>2</sup>It has been conjectured that the Duc d'Epemon, Jean-Louis de Nogaret de la Valette (1554-1642), Governor of Provence, and then of Guyenne (1622), had called the Saint to his house to offer him a bishopric. (Cf. Collet, *op. cit.*, p. 15.)

<sup>3</sup>Court divisions established by the pacificatory edict of 1576 in the Parlement of Paris and in that of Toulouse with residence in Castres for the purpose of judging cases in which Protestants were concerned. These courts were made up of an equal number of Catholics and Protestants.

<sup>4</sup>Throughout this edition the various denominations of foreign money have been left in the French since no adequate, unchanging value in modern currency can be assigned. One *écu* equals three *livres*; one thousand *livres* could support two priests and one brother for a year.

<sup>5</sup>Might this be the bishopric offered by the Duc d'Epemon?

same debt. I was informed that he was doing very well in Marseilles and had considerable means. Whereupon my attorney decided (as indeed was also dictated by the nature of the affair) that I should proceed to Marseilles. He thought that, once I had him arrested, I would be able to get two or three hundred écus from him. Since I had no money at all to carry out this plan, I sold the horse I had hired in Toulouse. I intended to pay for it on my return, which misfortune delayed so long that I am in great disgrace for having left my affairs in such disorder. I would never have done so had the Lord given me as much success in my undertaking as appearances led me to expect.

I set out, therefore, on this advice, caught my man in Marseilles, had him arrested, and agreed to three hundred écus, which he gave me in cash.<sup>6</sup> Just as I was about to leave by land, I was persuaded by a gentleman with whom I had lodged to go with him by boat as far as Narbonne since the weather was so favorable. I did this in order to get there sooner and to save money, or, to be more exact, so as never to get there and to lose everything.

The wind was as favorable as was necessary to take us to Narbonne that same day, which meant covering fifty leagues,<sup>7</sup> if God had not allowed three Turkish brigantines<sup>8</sup> to bear down upon us. They were sailing along the coast of the Gulf of Lion in order to seize the ships coming from Beaucaire where there was a fair considered to be one of the finest in Christendom.<sup>9</sup> They attacked

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<sup>6</sup>The Saint wrote *content* [pleased], but the spelling matters little; we think that *compliant* [cash] corresponds better to his thought.

<sup>7</sup>One *league* equals about two and a half miles or four kilometers.

<sup>8</sup>Brigantines at that time were small, decked ships rigged with only one sail and having eight to sixteen benches, each for a single oarsman. The oars were wide and flat.

<sup>9</sup>Beaucaire was the central market for goods coming from the East. The fair opened each year on July 22 and brought to that city countless boats from Marseilles, Cette, Aigues-Mortes and elsewhere. At the time of their departure, the boats that were headed for the open sea formed their own escort or had themselves accompanied by galleys for protection in case of attack. The pirates from the East and from Barbary lay in wait for them, posted on watch all along the coast, not far from the mouths of the Rhone. (Cf. Théodore Fassin, *Essai historique et juridique sur la foire de Beaucaire* [Aix: B. Niel, 1900]; Abel Boutin, *Les traités de paix et de commerce de la France avec la Barbarie, 1515-1830* [Paris: Pedone, 1902].)

us so violently that two or three of our men were killed and all the rest wounded, including myself. I received an arrow wound that will serve me as a clock for the rest of my life.<sup>10</sup> We were forced to surrender to those criminals worse than tigers whose first bursts of rage caused them to hack our pilot into a hundred thousand pieces because they had lost one of their leaders in addition to four or five of their galley slaves whom our men had killed.

Once that was done, they chained us, after crudely dressing our wounds, and continued their course, committing a thousand robberies. However, they allowed those who surrendered without fighting to go free after they had robbed them. And finally, at the end of seven or eight days, laden with booty, they set sail for Barbary, a lair and den of thieves, though the Grand Turk<sup>11</sup> does not admit it. On arriving there, they put us up for sale with a report of our capture, which they said had been made on a Spanish ship because, without that lie, we would have been released by the consul whom the King maintains there to assure free trade for the French.<sup>12</sup>

Their procedure for selling us was thus: after stripping us naked, they gave each of us a pair of pants, a linen jacket, and a small cap, and walked us up and down through the city of Tunis where they had purposely come to sell us. When they had had us make five or six rounds through the city with a chain around our neck, they took us back to the boat so that the merchants could come and see who could eat well and who could not, so as to show that our wounds were not mortal. That being done, they brought us back to the square where the merchants came to examine us just as one does when buying a horse or an ox. They made us open our mouths in order to look over our teeth; felt our ribs; probed our wounds; and made us walk, trot, and run; then carry loads and

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<sup>10</sup>The Saint suffered from his wound whenever the weather changed.

<sup>11</sup>The Emperor of the Ottoman Empire who resided in Turkey and ruled the farflung areas of the Empire through Beys.

<sup>12</sup>The Capitulations of 1535, 1569, 1581 and 1604 stipulated that the Barbary pirates would respect the freedom of French trade.

wrestle to judge each one's strength; and a thousand other kinds of brutalities.<sup>13</sup>

I was sold to a fisherman who was soon obliged to get rid of me because I found nothing so repugnant as the sea; then by the fisherman to an old man, a Spagirite doctor,<sup>14</sup> a master at drawing out quintessences, a most benevolent and amenable man. From what he told me, he had worked for fifty years in his quest for the philosophers' stone. He had searched for the stone in vain, but was quite successful with another kind of transmutation of metals. In proof of this, I often saw him melt together equal parts of gold and silver, place them in thin sheets, and then put on a layer of some powders, then another layer of the sheets, and then another layer of the powders. He would put them in a crucible or goldsmith's melting vessel, keep it on the fire for twenty-four hours, and then open it to find that the silver had become gold. More often still, he would congeal or fix mercury into fine silver and sell it in order to give alms to the poor. My job was to maintain the fire in ten or

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<sup>13</sup>This description corresponds almost word for word with those left by other freed slaves. Abel Boutin summarizes their testimony as follows: "All morning long the captives were on exhibition. According to eye witnesses, this was the most painful time of their captivity. Completely naked, under the burning rays of a tropical sun, they had to submit to all kinds of handling by the buyers, who examined them as is done with cattle or horses in our modern markets. They inspected their frame and the quality of their muscles. They tested their strength. They made them walk, run and jump. They looked at their teeth, the palms of their hands. . . ." (Boutin, *op. cit.*, p. 162.)

In Algiers, the sale was made through the intermediary of dealers who went around the market one after another, passing in front of the arcade. They enumerated the qualities, real or false, of the captives . . . and ended their harangue with the price desired: so many *piastres*. The buyers present would bid higher and the slave was awarded to the last and highest bidder. But there were also slaves who were defective, sickly, puny, or old, who could not have attracted a buyer if they had been placed on sale individually. Therefore, a batch of slaves was made up, half robust, half puny, and the whole group was awarded according to the usual procedure. (*Ibid.*, p. 166.)

Pierre Dan calculated at seven thousand the number of Christian captives in the regency of Tunis alone in the early years of the seventeenth century. The master had the power of life and death over his slave. He could keep him, set him free, or resell him. The slave was his chattel. (Cf. Pierre Dan, *Histoire de Barbarie et de ses corsaires* [2nd ed., Paris: P. Rocolet, 1649], p. 285.)

<sup>14</sup>The Spagirite physicians explained the organic changes of the human body in health and in sickness as the chemists of their day explained those of the inorganic realm. Paracelsus was the founder and head of this school in the sixteenth century.



twelve furnaces; doing so, thank God, was as much a pleasure as it was an affliction for me. He loved me dearly, and took great delight in speaking to me about alchemy and even more about his law, putting forth all his efforts to win me over to it, promising me copious wealth and all his knowledge.

God always kept alive in me the conviction that I would be freed because of my unceasing prayers to Him and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, through whose sole intercession I firmly believe I was delivered. The hope and firm belief, therefore, that I had of seeing you again, Monsieur, made me persistent in asking him to teach me how to cure gravel, for which I used to see him working miracles every day. This he did; indeed, he had me prepare and administer the ingredients. Oh! how many times I have wished since then that I had been a slave before the death of your late brother and *commacenas*<sup>15</sup> in doing good for me,<sup>16</sup> and that I had had the secret I am sending you.<sup>17</sup> I beg you to accept it with as much pleasure as my belief is firm that, if I had known what I am sending you, death would not already have triumphed over him (at

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<sup>15</sup>Maecenas, a favorite of Augustus, was in his time the protector of literary men, especially of Virgil and Horace.

<sup>16</sup>M. de Comet the elder, an advocate of the Presidial Court of Dax and a judge of Pouy, together with his brother, deserves the credit for discerning the capabilities of the young Vincent. Up to the day of his departure for the University of Toulouse, the latter allowed himself to be guided by the Comets who, in order to increase his slim resources, entrusted to him a tutorship in their own family. It must not be said, however, as did the Jansenist Martin de Barcos, that Saint Vincent de Paul entered Holy Orders without a vocation so as not to upset his two benefactors. (Cf. Martin de Barcos, *Défense de feu Monsieur Vincent de Paul . . . contre les faux discours du livre de sa vie publiée par M. Abelly, ancien évêque de Rodez, et contre les impostures de quelques autres écrits sur ce sujet* [n.p., 1666], p. 87.)

<sup>17</sup>We read in an old, undated, manuscript notebook, preserved at the hospice of Marans (Charente-Maritime): "Saint Vincent de Paul's remedy for gravel. Take two ounces of Venetian turpentine; two ounces of white turpeth; half an ounce each of mastic, galanga, clove, cubed cinnamon; one ounce of ground aloes-wood. Mix it all together with half a pound of white honey and a pint of very strong brandy. Let it stand for some time and then distill it. One should take one-fourth tablespoon in the morning, fasting, and be careful to fill it up with borage or bugloss water, taking it as many times as one desires because it cannot be detrimental; on the contrary, it is very good for one's health, especially for the kidneys. Therefore, there is no reason to follow any other diet, except that no food should be taken for an hour afterwards; and one may carry on one's ordinary tasks. Experience will prove this. The great servant of God learned this in Barbary when he was a captive."

least by that means), although it is said that man's days are numbered before God. That is true, but it is not because God had calculated his days to be a certain number, but the number was calculated before God because it came about that way; or, to speak more clearly, he did not die when he did because God had anticipated it that way or had calculated the number of his days to be so many, but he had anticipated it that way and the number of his days was known to be so many, because he died when he did.

I was, therefore, with this old man from the month of September 1605<sup>18</sup> until the following August when he was seized and taken away to the Grand Sultan<sup>19</sup> to work for him, but in vain; he died of grief on the way. He left me to one of his nephews, a real anthropomorphist,<sup>20</sup> who sold me again soon after his uncle's death, because he heard that M. de Brèves,<sup>21</sup> the Kings' Ambassador in Turkey, was coming with valid and explicit letters patent from the Grand Turk to reclaim the Christian slaves.

A renegade<sup>22</sup> from Nice in Savoy, hostile by nature, bought me

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<sup>18</sup>He remained, therefore, only about one or two months with his first owner.

<sup>19</sup>Achmet I, son and successor of Mohammed III.

<sup>20</sup>A name given to those who attributed a human form to God. It seemed strange to Martin de Barcos that Saint Vincent mentioned here the theological opinions of his master and he presumed that Abelly had misread the original. (Cf. Martin de Barcos, *Réplique à l'écrit que M. Abelly, ancien évêque de Rodez, a publié pour défendre son livre de la vie de M. Vincent* [n. p., 1669], p. 13.) It could be that Abelly afterwards had some doubts, because, in the second edition, the word *anthropomorphite* is omitted.

<sup>21</sup>François Savary, Seigneur de Brèves, Ambassador to Constantinople from 1589 to 1607 and to Rome from 1607 to 1615; tutor of Gaston, Louis XIII's brother; the Queen's First Squire; and a member of the Council of Despatches; one of the cleverest negotiators during the reign of Henri IV. He died in 1628 at the age of sixty-eight.

Savary de Brèves landed at Tunis on June 17, 1606. He had orders to demand the release of all French slaves, the restitution of merchandise and ships taken by the pirates, and finally the abolition of the right of visitation. In the month of August, after lengthy negotiations, the Tunisians promised not to interfere with the trade of French merchants and to return to the Consul everything that the corsairs might take from the French. The Ambassador left on August 24 accompanied by seventy-two slaves. All he had obtained were empty promises and the freedom of a few captives. (Cf. Jacques de Castel, *Relation des voyages de Monsieur de Brèves tant en Grèce, Terre Sainte et Egypte qu'aux royaumes de Tunis et d'Alger, ensemble un traité fait l'an 1604* [Paris: n. p., 1628].) Castel was secretary to Savary de Brèves.

<sup>22</sup>Renegades were numerous. They were recruited either from among the slaves or from foreigners who had come to Barbary to escape their creditors. Those who embraced Islam were freed of all debts according to Moslem law. Slaves who converted to the religion of

and took me to his *temat*;<sup>23</sup> that is what they call the land that one holds as a sharecropper of the Grand Lord, because the people own nothing; everything belongs to the Sultan. This man's *temat* was in the mountains, where the country is extremely hot and forsaken. One of the three wives that he had (she was like a Greek-Christian, but schismatic) possessed a fine mind and became very fond of me; and nearer the end, another of them, a native Turk, who served God's immense mercy as an instrument in recalling her husband from apostasy and restoring him to the bosom of the Church, brought about my deliverance from slavery. As she was interested in knowing our way of life, she used to come to see me every day in the fields where I was digging. At the end, she ordered me to sing praises to my God. The memory of the *Quomodo cantabimus in terra aliena* of the children of Israel, captives in Babylon, made me begin, with tears in my eyes, the psalm<sup>24</sup> *Super flumina Babylonis*, and then the *Salve, Regina* and several other hymns. The pleasure she received from these was as great as her admiration of them. She did not fail to tell her husband in the evening that he had been wrong to give up his religion, which she considered exceedingly good because of what I had told her about our God and some praises I had sung to Him in her presence. She said that these latter gave her such divine pleasure that she did not believe the paradise of her fathers, which she was awaiting, was as glorious or accompanied by so much joy as the pleasure she felt while I was praising my God. She concluded that there was something marvelous about it.

This other Caiphas or Balaam's ass, by her words, caused her husband to tell me the very next day that our escaping to France depended only upon an opportunity,<sup>25</sup> but that he would remedy

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Mohammed had more freedom than the others and were treated less harshly. The most formidable captains spoken of in the history of Barbary piracy were almost all renegades. Once they had made their fortune, they enjoyed it peacefully in sumptuous palaces.

<sup>23</sup>A Turkish word.

<sup>24</sup>Ps. 137: 1-4. "By the streams of Babylon we sat and wept. . . . How could we sing a song of the Lord in a foreign land?" (NAB)

<sup>25</sup>It was impossible to escape by land because the regency of Tunis was surrounded by

matters so well within a short time that God would be praised by it. A few days became ten months, during which he kept alive in me these vain but finally realized hopes. At the end of that time, we escaped in a little skiff and made our way, on June 28, to Aigues-Mortes<sup>26</sup> and soon after to Avignon, where the Vice-Legate<sup>27</sup> received the renegade publicly, with tears in his eyes and his voice broken by sobs, in the church of Saint-Pierre, to the honor of God and the edification of the congregation. The above-mentioned prelate has kept us both with him in order to take us to Rome. He is going there just as soon as his successor to the three-year term of office<sup>28</sup> — which he completed on the feast of Saint John — has arrived.<sup>29</sup> He has promised the penitent that he would have him admitted into the austere convent of the *Fate ben fratelli*,<sup>30</sup> to which he has vowed himself,<sup>31</sup> and see that I was provided with some good benefice. He does me the honor of loving me very much and treating me with affection because of a few alchemy secrets that I have taught him. He values these more, he says, than if *io li avesse dato un monte di oro*,<sup>32</sup> because he has worked on them his whole lifetime and desires no other satisfaction. This same Bishop, since he knows that I am a churchman, has ordered me to send for my letters of ordination, assuring me that he will help me and provide me with a very good benefice. I was at a loss to find a trustworthy man to do this, when a friend of mine from the household of this same Bishop recommended to me

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deserts infested by wild beasts. By sea, flight was perilous, since the coasts were under constant surveillance. When escaping renegades were caught, they paid for their daring attempt with their lives.

<sup>26</sup>A little town in Gard situated on the bank of a large pond about five miles from the sea, to which it is joined by a canal built under Louis XV.

<sup>27</sup>Pietro Francesco Montorio was born in March 1558 in Narni. He was made Bishop of Nicastro in 1593, Vice-Legate of Avignon in 1604, Nuncio to Cologne in 1621, and died in Rome in June 1643.

<sup>28</sup>The vice-legates of Avignon were appointed for three years.

<sup>29</sup>The successor of Pietro Francesco Montorio was Giuseppi Ferreri, Archbishop of Urbino.

<sup>30</sup>*Do good, brothers*, a popular name given to a hospital run by the Brothers of Saint John of God.

<sup>31</sup>Abelly does not give the rest of the letter.

<sup>32</sup>*I had given him a mountain of gold.*

Monsieur Canterelle, the bearer of this letter, who was going to Toulouse. I asked him to take the trouble of riding as far as Dax to deliver this letter to you and to obtain the above-mentioned papers and the ones I received in Toulouse as a Bachelor of Theology.<sup>33</sup> I entreat you to give them to him. I am sending you a voucher for them for that purpose. The said Monsieur Canterelle is of the household and has been expressly ordered by the Bishop to carry out his commission faithfully and to send the papers to me in Rome, if indeed we have set out.

I brought from Turkey two stones that nature has faceted like diamonds. I am sending one of them to you. May your pleasure in accepting it equal my feeling of unworthiness in offering it to you.

It is impossible, Monsieur, for you and my relatives not to have been slandered by my creditors on my account. I would already have partly satisfied them with one hundred or one hundred twenty écus given me by our penitent, had I not been advised by my best friends to keep them until my return from Rome so as to avoid the mishaps that might be mine for want of money (although I eat at the Bishop's table and enjoy his favor), but I think that all this disgrace will turn to good.

I am writing to Monsieur D'Arnaudin<sup>34</sup> and to my mother. I beg you to have my letters sent to them by a man whom Monsieur Canterelle will pay. If, by chance, my mother has withdrawn the letters, they are filed as a measure of precaution with Monsieur Rabel.<sup>35</sup> I have nothing else to say except that, entreating you to

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<sup>33</sup>They found in the Saint's room after his death his Bachelor of Theology papers received at the University of Toulouse, and those of the Licentiate in Canon Law which had been conferred upon him by the University of Paris. (Deposition of Brother Chollier at the process of beatification; cf. *Summarium ex processu ne perseant probationes auctoritate apostolica fabricato*, p. 5.) Vincent de Paul never gives himself any other titles. Those who attribute to him a Licentiate in Theology (Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. III, chap. XIII, p. 199) or a Doctorate in the same field (*Gallia Christiana*, vol. II, col. 1413) are certainly mistaken.

<sup>34</sup>Probably Pierre Darnaudin, a notary.

<sup>35</sup>Pierre Rabel or Ravel was, we believe, Episcopal Secretary. We find him named in a 1603 document as the representative appointed by the Bishop of Dax to transact business with the notary Bayle. (Unclassified archives of the civil seneschal of Dax.)

continue your holy affection for me, I remain, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

DEPAUL<sup>36</sup>

Avignon, July 24, 1607

*Addressed:* Monsieur de Comet, advocate at the Presidial Court of Dax, in Dax

## 2. - TO MONSIEUR DE COMET, IN DAX

Monsieur,

I have written to you twice by the mail service from Spain which goes to Paris and Bayonne. I addressed my letters to Monsieur de la Lande<sup>1</sup> in order to have them forwarded to the King's procurator who I recall is a relative. I did not know *cui altari vovere vota mea*<sup>2</sup> in order to have news of you, when God, Who, *etiamsi differat, non aufert tamen spei effectus*,<sup>3</sup> caused me to

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<sup>36</sup>The first three letters of Saint Vincent are signed *Depaul*; the following ones, *Vincent Depaul*, or for short, *V.D.*, sometimes, *V.D.P.* Never in the Saint's hand do we find *de Paul* in two words, although his contemporaries separated the two syllables of his name in that way. In the parish registers of his native village and the surrounding localities and at the bottom of notarized family documents we find both spellings. However, this question is not important. The particle is not considered a sign of nobility by any genealogist, and rightly so. A mere perusal of the old Catholicity registers of Pouy would convince anyone of this; nearly all the peasants have a *de* in front of their name. The reason for this lies in the fact that, at least in that part of the Landes, many people's names were originally names of places. We find in Pouy two spots which were formerly called *Paul* and still are today: a house situated in the neighborhood of Buglose, and a stream that crosses the road about halfway between Buglose and the Berceau. It is fairly probable that the Saint's distant relatives had lived either in that house or on the banks of that stream. They were *from Paul (de Paul)* and they kept that name.

**Letter 2.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), original autograph letter. We have already given the history of the original of this letter in the citation for letter no. 1.

<sup>1</sup>Very probably Bertrand de Lalande, Councillor of the King and Lieutenant General of the Presidial of Dax. By his marriage to Jeanne de Parage, Dame d'Escanebaque, he became the founder of the De Lalande family, Seigneurs d'Escanebaque in Sabres (Landes).

<sup>2</sup>Whom to ask.

<sup>3</sup>Although He may delay, nevertheless, does not remove the fulfillment or our hope.

meet this venerable Father who was just about to leave. Through him, I hope to enjoy the benefit of which I have been deprived by the perfidiousness of those to whom one entrusts letters.

This benefit is nothing else, Monsieur, than a renewed assurance of your good health and that of your whole family whom I pray the Lord to gladden with the abundance of His grace. I thanked you in my preceding letters for the paternal care you so kindly take of me and my affairs. I asked God, as I am still doing and shall do all my life, to please grant me the means of repaying you by my service, which you secured at the price of all the good that a father can do for his own son.

I am very sorry that I can write to you only<sup>4</sup> very briefly about the state of my affairs because of the hasty departure of the ill-mannered sailors with whom the venerable Father is leaving. From what he told me, he is not going to Dax, but rather to Béarn. He told me that Father Antoine Pontanus, who has always been a good friend of mine, is preaching there. I am addressing my letters to him as to someone from whom I may expect a favor. I am asking him to be so kind as to forward this letter to you and to send back to me, if he has an opportunity — as Father told me he would have — the answer that I hope you will be pleased to write me.

In a word, then, this is the state of my affairs. I am in this city of Rome, where I am continuing my studies, maintained by the former Vice-Legate of Avignon.<sup>5</sup> He honors me with his affection and his desire for my advancement, because I have shown him some unusually marvelous things I learned while I was the slave of that old Turk to whom, as I wrote you, I had been sold. Among these marvels is the beginning — not the total perfection — of the mirror of Archimedes and an artificial spring that makes a death's head talk, which the scoundrel used to use to deceive the people by telling them that his god Mohammed communicated his will to

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<sup>4</sup>This word is repeated in the original.

<sup>5</sup>Pietro Francesco Montorio.

him by means of that head. I learned from him a thousand other wonderful geometrical things of which the said Bishop is so jealous that he does not even want me to stop and talk to anyone for fear that I might teach them to him. He wants to have for himself alone the reputation of knowing these things which he enjoys showing now and then to His Holiness<sup>6</sup> and the cardinals. This affection and benevolence of his ensure for me, as he has also promised me, the means of an honorable retirement by obtaining for me, with that end in view, a suitable benefice in France. That is why I greatly need a copy of my letters of ordination, signed and sealed by the Bishop of Dax,<sup>7</sup> together with a letter of recommendation from the said Bishop. He could compile it by means of a brief inquiry among some of our friends as to the fact that I have always been considered a good-living man, together with all the other little formalities required for this purpose. The above-mentioned Bishop is urging me every day to get this letter of reference. That is why, Monsieur, I most humbly entreat you to be

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<sup>6</sup>Paul V (1605-1621).

<sup>7</sup>The copy sent to the Saint at his request began thus: "Extract from the fourth register of the Ecclesiastical Insertions of the diocese of Acqs (d'Acqs)." Then came the text of the letters of ordination followed by: "In the year sixteen hundred four and on the twentieth day of the present month of October, all the above-mentioned letters of ordination to the priesthood were inserted and registered in the fourth register of the Ecclesiastical Insertions of the diocese of Acqs at the request of the said Vincent de Paul named herein. And on the fifteenth day of the present month of May, sixteen hundred eight, the entire text was carefully and duly extracted, certified and verified with the said fourth register of the Insertions, at the request of (the place for the name was left blank) his brother, in the name of and at the request of the said Vincent de Paul, to be used as he sees fit. Drawn up at d'Acqs on the day and in the year mentioned above by me. De Luc, registrar." The attestation, in Latin, of Jean-Jacques Dusault, Bishop of Dax, completed the document; "Jean-Jacques Dusault, by the grace of God and the favor of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Dax, to all who read the present letter, greetings in the Lord. We make it known and we attest that the above-mentioned letter of all the orders and the dimissorial of Master Vincent de Paul, priest of our diocese, inscribed and entered in the register of ecclesiastical insertions of our said diocese, inserted from a true original, were extracted thence as we attest by the tenor of these presents. In faith thereof, we have ordered that the said certificatory letter be validated by our sign and seal and by the sign of our secretary. Given at Dax on the seventeenth day of the month of May in the year of Our Lord one thousand six hundred eight. J.-J. Dusault, Bishop of Dax. By order of the aforesaid My Lord the Most Reverend Bishop, Duclous, Secretary." (Arch. of the Priests of the Mission, eighteenth century copy.)



so good as to do for me once again the kindness of picking up another certification of my letters, and of helping me to obtain the character reference from the said Bishop of Dax in the form stated above, sending it to me by way of the above-mentioned Father Pontanus. I would have sent you some money for this purpose were it not for my fear that the money might cause the letter to be lost. That is why I am asking you to arrange with my mother<sup>8</sup> to furnish what is necessary. I think that three or four écus will be needed. I have already given two as a suitable offering to this religious who has promised me that he would hand them over to the above-mentioned Father Antoine<sup>9</sup> so that he might forward them for that purpose. If that will do, please accept them; if not, I promise that I shall send you what has been supplied in the course of four or five months by a letter of exchange, together with what I owe in Toulouse. I am determined to discharge my debts since God has been pleased to give me legitimate means. I am writing to Monsieur Dussin, my uncle,<sup>10</sup> asking him kindly to assist me in this affair.

I received, from the person who went to visit you for me, the Bachelor's certificate which you so kindly sent me, together with a copy of my papers. The latter were judged invalid because they had not been authorized by the signature and seal of the said Bishop of Dax.

There is nothing new that I can write to you about except for the conversion of three Tartar families who came to this city to become Christians — His Holiness received them with tears in his eyes — and the conversion to Catholicism of a bishop who was an ambassador for the schismatic Greeks.

Haste obliges me to conclude this letter — badly blotted right here — with my humble prayer that you will excuse my excessive

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<sup>8</sup>Vincent de Paul had lost his father in 1598. (Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. III, p. 12.)

<sup>9</sup>Antoine Pontanus.

<sup>10</sup>Probably Dominique Dussin, who was or later became Pastor of Pouy. (Collet, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 109.)

importunity and believe that I shall hasten my return as much as I can, so that I may come and acquit myself of the service I owe you. Until then, I remain, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

DEPAUL

Rome, February 28, 1608

*Addressed:* Monsieur de Comet, advocate at the Presidial Court of Dax, in Dax

### 3. - TO HIS MOTHER, IN POUY<sup>1</sup>

February 17, 1610

Mother,

The assurance that Monsieur de Saint-Martin<sup>2</sup> has given me with regard to your good health has gladdened me, as much as the prolonged sojourn which I must necessarily make in this city<sup>3</sup> in order to regain my chances for advancement (which my disasters took from me) grieves me, because I cannot come to render you the services I owe you. But I have such trust in God's grace, that He will bless my efforts and will soon give me the means of an honorable retirement<sup>4</sup> so that I may spend the rest of my days near

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**Letter 3.** - Reg. I, f<sup>o</sup> 1. The copyist notes that the original was written entirely in the Saint's hand.

<sup>1</sup>Saint-Vincent-de-Paul (Landes). Saint Vincent was born in this little village about eight kilometers from Dax. A large complex of buildings now occupies the place where he came into the world.

<sup>2</sup>Probably Jean de Saint-Martin, husband of Catherine de Comet, brother of Canon de Saint-Martin, and judge of Pouy. M. de Comet the younger apparently had died before 1610.

<sup>3</sup>According to Abelly (*op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. V, beginning, p. 20), Saint Vincent came to Paris from Rome around the end of 1608 as an envoy from Cardinal d'Ossat to Henri IV. No document of the period mentions this secret mission, and it is certain that Cardinal d'Ossat had nothing to do with it, since he had died on March 13, 1604.

<sup>4</sup>On May 17, 1610, Saint Vincent was given the benefice that he was expecting, the Abbey of Saint-Léonard de Chaulmes in the diocese of Saintes (Charente-Maritime). (Cf. vol. XIII, no. 9.)

you.<sup>5</sup> I spoke of the state of my affairs to Monsieur de Saint-Martin who told me that he wished to continue the benevolence and affection which Monsieur de Comet so kindly manifested for us. I asked him to tell you all about it.

I should very much like to know how things are at home, and whether all my brothers and sisters<sup>6</sup> and our other relatives and friends are well, and especially whether my brother Gayon is married and to whom. Also, how is everything with my sister Marie, at Paillole?<sup>7</sup> Is she still alive and sharing the house with her brother-in-law Bertrand? As for my other sister, I imagine she cannot but be well-off, so long as God is pleased to give her a companion. I should also like my brother to have one of my nephews study.<sup>8</sup> My misfortunes and the little service that I have as yet been able to render at home may make him unwilling to do so, but let him reflect that the present misfortune presupposes good luck in the future.

That is all, Mother, that I can tell you at present, except that I entreat you to offer my humble respects to all my brothers and

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<sup>5</sup>How greatly this language differs from that which Saint Vincent will use later when he has had more contact with souls, seen their needs, felt their sufferings, and heard their appeals.

<sup>6</sup>We know from Abelly (*op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. II, beginning, p. 7) that Vincent de Paul was the third child in a family of four boys and two girls. In a notarized document dated September 4, 1626, signed Vincent Depaul, mention is made of "Bernard and Gayon Depaul, brothers of the said Sieur Vincent Depaul," the latter "his second brother," of "Marie [Marie-Claudine] Depaul, his sister, wife of Grégoire," and of another "Marie Depaul, his sister," widow of "Jehan de Paillole." A document dated May 12, 1631, published in the *Revue de Gascogne* (1905, pp. 354-357), mentions "Pierre Depaul, called De Leschine," son of "the late Jehan Depaul." If we compare a letter from M. Lostalot, dated September 25, 1682 (Arch. of the Priests of the Mission), with the registers of Catholicity, we are led to conclude that Pierre de Paul was the Saint's nephew and, consequently, that his father was Vincent's brother. Jean was not mentioned in the 1626 document because he had already died. Jean, Bernard, Gayon, Marie, and another Marie: such then were the names of Saint Vincent's brothers and sisters, but there is nothing to tell us in what order to place them.

<sup>7</sup>Paillole was the name of the house in which the Saint's sister lived. The house was near the church, where another house bearing the same name now stands.

<sup>8</sup>One of Saint Vincent's nephews studied and became a priest. In fact, in a register of the prebendaries of Capbreton (Landes) we read: "M. François Depaul, priest, prebendary of Capbreton in the place of M. Jean de Pontels, died on June 8, 1678. He was a native of Pouy near d'Acqs, and a nephew of M. Vincent, priest, Founder of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission." (Archives of M. l'abbé Gabarra, Pastor of Capbreton.)

sisters and to all our other relatives and friends. I pray to God unceasingly for your health and for the prosperity of the family, as one who is and who shall be for you, Mother, a most humble, most obedient, and helpful son and servant.

DEPAUL

I entreat you to offer my humble respects to all my brothers and sisters and to all our relatives and friends, especially to Bétan.

4.- TO EDMOND MAULJEAN, VICAR GENERAL OF SENS<sup>1</sup>

June 20, 1616

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

We sometimes meet good people who wish to make a general confession, and because we very often encounter reserved cases<sup>2</sup> and find it difficult to send them away, I thought of entreating you most humbly to grant me permission to absolve them from the said reserved cases. I assure you that I shall in no way abuse this, and that I shall be all my life, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

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**Letter 4.** - Reg. I, f<sup>o</sup> 1. The copyist notes that the original was written entirely in the Saint's own handwriting.

<sup>1</sup>Born in the diocese of Châlons, died March 1, 1617. Vincent de Paul, tutor to the children of Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, General of the Galleys and Comte de Joigny, often had occasion to go with them to this city situated in the diocese of Sens.

<sup>2</sup>Reservation of sins is the limitation by a competent superior of an inferior's power of absolution so that the latter cannot absolve certain sins because of the lack of jurisdiction.

5. - EDMOND MAULJEAN TO SAINT VINCENT

*Monsieur,*

*I have such great assurance of your competence, prudence, capability, and other merits that I most willingly grant you what you ask. May God give you the grace to acquit yourself worthily of it, as I trust you shall.*

*In token of the above, I have signed this note for you on the twentieth day of June, 1616.*

*Mauljean*

6. - TO PHILIPPE-EMMANUEL DE GONDI,<sup>1</sup> IN PROVENCE

[August or September 1617]<sup>2</sup>

Saint Vincent writes from Châtillon-les-Dombes<sup>3</sup> that, not having the requisite qualities to be a tutor in a family of such high nobility as that of the De Gondis, he has secretly left Paris, strongly determined to devote himself to parish ministry in the place where he is.

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**Letter 5.** - Reg. I, f<sup>o</sup> 1. Edmond Mauljean wrote his reply following Vincent de Paul's request.

**Letter 6.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. IX, p. 38.

<sup>1</sup>Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, General of the Galleys of France, was the father of the second Cardinal de Retz, Jean-François-Paul de Gondi, who distinguished himself by his intrigues during the Fronde. When he became a widower, he entered the Oratorian Fathers and spent the rest of his life in the practice of Christian and religious virtues. He died in Joigny on June 29, 1662. The Congregation of the Mission, the Oratory, and Carmel honor him as one of their outstanding benefactors. Remarks on his life can be read in: R. P. Ingold, *Bibliothèque oratorienne* (Paris: Poussielgue, 1882-1883), vol. I, pp. 421-448; and in: Louis Batterel, *Mémoires domestiques pour servir à l'histoire de l'oratoire* (Paris: Picard, 1902-1905), vol. I, pp. 322-361.

<sup>2</sup>Abelly tells us that the General of the Galleys received Vincent de Paul's letter at the end of August or during the first two weeks of September.

<sup>3</sup>Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne (Ain), in the diocese of Belley.

7. - MADAME DE GONDI TO SAINT VINCENT<sup>1</sup>

[September 1617]<sup>2</sup>

Monsieur,

*I was not mistaken when I feared losing your assistance, as I mentioned to you so many times, since I have indeed lost it. My anguish over this would be unbearable without a very special grace from God which I do not deserve. If it were only for a time, I would not be so upset; but when I think of all the occasions on which I shall need to be assisted by direction and counsel, either in death or in life, my grief begins anew. Consider then whether my mind and body can bear this grief for long. I am not able to seek nor receive assistance elsewhere, because you are well aware that I am not free to reveal the needs of my soul to many people.*

*Monsieur de Bérulle<sup>3</sup> promised me that he would write to you, and I am calling upon God and the Holy Virgin to give you back to our home for the salvation of our whole family and of many others towards whom you will be able to exercise your charity. I entreat you once again to practice it towards us for the love you bear Our Lord, to Whose goodness I entrust myself on this occasion, although with a great fear of not being able to persevere.*

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**Letter 7.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. IX, p. 41.

<sup>1</sup>Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, wife of Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, was born in 1580 of Antoine de Silly, Comte de Rochepot, Baron de Montmirail, Ambassador to Spain, and of Marie de Lannoy. Shortly after Saint Vincent entered her house as her children's tutor, she entrusted to him the direction of her soul. The Saint's influence was not long in making itself felt. The devout woman formed the habit of visiting and serving the sick, and of distributing abundant alms to the poor. She had missions given on her estates and joined the Confraternity of Charity in Montmirail. She died on June 23, 1625, after having her saintly director named head of the Collège des Bons-Enfants, and having provided him with the means of establishing the Congregation of the Mission by a gift of forty-five thousand livres. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chaps. VII-XVIII; Hilarion de Coste, *Les éloges et vies des reynes, princesses, dames et damoiselles illustres en piété, courage et doctrine* [Paris: S. Cramoisy, 1630], vol. II, pp. 389 ff.; Régis de Chantelauze, *Saint Vincent de Paul et les Gondi* [Paris: E. Plon, 1882].)

<sup>2</sup>Madame de Gondi received the letter in which her husband apprised her of Saint Vincent's decision on September 14; it was after that letter that she wrote hers.

<sup>3</sup>Pierre de Bérulle was born in the Château de Cérilly (Yonne), near Troyes, on February 4, 1575. Shortly after his priestly ordination, which took place in 1599, he was named Chaplain of the King. His talent for debate enabled him to bring back to the bosom of the Church several prominent people, among others the Comte de Laval, the Baron de Salignac, and a presiding justice of the Parlement of Paris. The King, Louis XIII, entrusted him with the honorable mission of conducting to England Henriette-Marie of France, daughter of Henri IV, who was going to marry the Prince of Wales, the future Charles I of England. With the help of Michel

*If you refuse me after that, I shall hold you responsible before God for whatever happens to me, and for all the good that I shall fail to do for want of being helped. You are putting me in danger of being very frequently deprived of the sacraments in various places because of the great difficulties which may befall me there and the few people who are capable of assisting me. You know very well that the General has the same desire as I, which God alone is giving him by His mercy. Do not resist the good that you can do by assisting in his salvation, since he is destined one day to assist in that of many others. I know that, since my life serves only to offend God, it is not dangerous to place it in peril, but my soul should be assisted at death. Remember the apprehension in which you saw me during my last illness in a village; I risk falling into a worse state. The mere fear of that would do me so much harm that, were it not for my former excellent health, I think it might possibly cause my death.*

8. - TO MADAME DE GONDI

[September or October 1617]<sup>1</sup>

Vincent de Paul consoles and encourages Mme de Gondi, while exhorting her to be submissive to the good pleasure of God.<sup>2</sup>

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de Marillac, Keeper of the Seals, and of Madame Acarie, he established the Carmelites in France in 1603; and in 1611, he founded the Congregation of the Oratory of which he became the first Superior. His influence over the clergy was considerable. He gathered around him the most virtuous and eminent priests of Paris. It was to his house that Saint Vincent, after his arrival in the city, went to seek help and advice. Pierre de Bérulle looked askance at the birth of the Congregation of the Mission and even tried to prevent its approbation in the Curia of Rome. He was made a cardinal and died a year later on October 2, 1629. (Cf. vol. II, no. 677.)

**Letter 8.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. IX, p. 43.

<sup>1</sup>This letter is the reply to the preceding one.

<sup>2</sup>Saint Vincent's response did not discourage Madame de Gondi. She had her children, the chief officers of her house, Father de Bérulle, Henri de Gondi, the first Cardinal de Retz and the Bishop of Paris, doctors and religious, in short, anyone who might exercise any influence over her saintly director, write to him. The intervention of Father Bence, the Superior of the Oratory in Lyons, was the most efficacious of all — the Saint promised him that he would go to Paris to seek advice from his friends.

9. - PHILIPPE-EMMANUEL DE GONDI TO SAINT VINCENT

October 15, 1617

*Two days ago I received the letter you wrote me from Lyons, in which I learned of the decision you have made to take a little trip to Paris at the end of November, which makes me extremely happy. I hope that I will see you there at that time, and that you will grant to my prayers and to the advice of all your good friends the favor which I desire of you.*

*I shall say no more to you about this, since you have seen the letter that I wrote to my wife. I merely entreat you to bear in mind that God seems to wish the father and his children to be upright people by means of you.*

10. - TO CHARLES DU FRESNE!  
SECRETARY OF PHILIPPE-EMMANUEL DE GONDI

[October 1617]<sup>2</sup>

Saint Vincent informs his friend that he hopes to take a trip to Paris in two months. There, according to the enlightenment that God gives him, he will make a final decision concerning his return to Châtillon-les-Dombes or to the De Gondi family.<sup>3</sup>

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**Letter 9.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. IX, p. 44.

**Letter 10.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. IX, p. 44.

<sup>1</sup>Sieur de Villeneuve, former secretary of Queen Marguerite de Valois. After the death of this princess, he entered the house of Emmanuel de Gondi, for whom he was secretary, then intendant. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. V, p. 21.) He was one of the closest friends of Saint Vincent.

<sup>2</sup>This letter was written on very nearly the same date as the preceding one.

<sup>3</sup>It was upon this latter course that Vincent de Paul decided, after consulting Father de Bérulle and other enlightened individuals. He arrived in Paris on December 23, and the next day he resumed his post in the De Gondi family.



11. - TO NICOLAS DE BAILLEUL, PROVOST OF TRADESMEN<sup>1</sup>

July 25, 1625

Vincent de Paul, head of the Collège des Bons-Enfants,<sup>2</sup> near the Porte Saint-Victor,<sup>3</sup> humbly makes this petition, stating that the buildings of the above-mentioned collège are in a state of great ruin because of their antiquity. To avoid their complete collapse, some work must be done quickly on the chapel and the collège building where a great number of extensive repairs are needed.<sup>4</sup> In view of this, Monsieur, in order to be more sure of the repairs necessary for the said collège, would you please give orders for it to be visited and gone over by two sworn master masons or other

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Letter 11. - Arch. Nat. S 6373, copy.

<sup>1</sup>Nicolas de Bailleul, Seigneur de Vattetot-sur-Mer and Seigneur de Soisy-sur-Mer. Provost of Tradesmen from 1622 to 1628, then *President à mortier*, Superintendent of Finances, and Minister of State. He died August 20, 1652, in his sixty-sixth year. The Provost of Tradesmen was the chief officer of the municipal administration of Paris; he was appointed by the King.

<sup>2</sup>On March 1, 1624, Jean-François de Gondi, Archbishop of Paris, had turned over to Saint Vincent the direction of the Collège des Bons-Enfants so that he might have a place to lodge the priests wishing to join him in giving missions in the country. This Collège, nearly three centuries old, was one of the oldest of the University, almost abandoned, and in a pitiable state of decay. It occupied an area of about sixteen acres. It was not a teaching center but simply a hostel in which students, whether foundation scholars (e.g. Pluyette scholarship fund) or paying boarders, were provided with shelter and sleeping quarters. The Saint waited until after the death of Madame de Gondi to go and live there. In the beginning, he had two assistants: Antoine Portail, who remained faithful to him until his death, and another priest whose name is unknown, but who is certainly not Adrien Gambart, as has been mistakenly supposed, since Adrien Gambart was ordained a priest only in 1633. (Cf. *Missionnaire paroissial*, vol. 89 in *Collection intégral et universelle des Orateurs chrétiens* [100 vols., Paris: Migne, 1844-1892].) When the Missionaries went to the country, which used to happen often, they entrusted the keys to a neighbor.

<sup>3</sup>There was another Collège des Bons-Enfants in the vicinity of the Louvre, in the faubourg Saint-Honoré. The one where Saint Vincent lived, near the Porte Saint-Victor, was on the spot occupied today by the house at 2 rue des Ecoles.

<sup>4</sup>The report of the experts, dated July 27, gives us an idea of the condition of the buildings. "It was evident that the main portion of the wing to the left of the entrance, the largest of all, was not being used because of its delapidated condition, and it was judged necessary to raze it and rebuild it from top to bottom. The others all needed considerable repairs, not only with respect to the roofing, wainscoting, sustaining walls, doors, and casements, most of which were worthless, but also on the main walls, the cesspools, the floors, and the staircases." (Cf. *Réflexions sur les différents comptes du collège des Bons-Enfants en réponse aux observations du sieur Reboul, archiviste du collège Louis-le-Grand sur le même objet*, Arch. Nat. H<sup>3</sup> 3288.)

such men whom you might choose to appoint. They will draw up their report with regard to carrying out these repairs and ordering what is proper, and you will be acting with justice.<sup>5</sup>

*Addressed:* The Provost of Paris or the Civil Lieutenant, guardian of University privileges

## 12. - TO SAINT LOUISE DE MARILLAC<sup>1</sup>

October 30, 1626

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

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<sup>5</sup>Vincent de Paul received the authorization to make the renovations considered urgent by the experts, and to borrow for that purpose, if need be, by mortgaging the collège property. For lack of funds, he contented himself with the repairs that were absolutely indispensable; the rest were put off until later. (Cf. *Réflexions sur les différents comptes du collège des Bons-Enfants.*)

**Letter 12.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 2.

<sup>1</sup>Saint Louise de Marillac 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 (1626-1630), and the Marshal de Marillac, renowned for his misfortunes and tragic death. She was the widow of Antoine Le Gras, secretary of Queen Marie de Médicis. She had married him February 5, 1613, and lost him December 21, 1625. They had a son, Michel, who at the time of this letter had just turned thirteen. The devout widow had placed her entire confidence in her spiritual director, Vincent de Paul, and found it hard to bear with his long absences. The holy director employed her in his charitable works. The day was coming when he would make her his collaborator in the creation and organization of the Confraternities of Charity. The life of Louise de Marillac, whom the Church beatified on May 9, 1920, has been written by Gobillon (1676), the Comtesse de Richemont (1883), Comte de Lambel, Monsignor Baunard (1898), and Emmanuel de Broglie (1911). Her letters and other writings were copied and partially published in the work entitled: *Louise de Marillac, veuve de M. Le Gras. Sa vie, ses vertus, son esprit* (4 vols., Bruges, 1886). Louise de Marillac was canonized on March 11, 1934, and on February 10, 1960, she was named patroness of all those who devote themselves to Christian social work. Therefore, in this English edition of the letters of Saint Vincent, *Saint* has been added to her name in Coste's titles of letters and in the footnotes. To the above bibliography should be added; Bishop Jean Calvet, *Louise de Marillac. A Portrait*, translated by G. F. Pullen (1959); Joseph I. Dirvin, *Louise de Marillac* (1970); the compilation by an anonymous editor: *Louise de Marillac, ses écrits* (1961); and the revised edition of this work, entitled: *Sainte Louise de Marillac. Ecrits spirituels* (1983).

The title of *Madame* was formerly reserved to the wives of knights. The spouses of simple squires, regardless of their husbands' degree of nobility, had right only to the title of

I received your letter here in Loisy-en-Brie,<sup>2</sup> twenty-eight leagues from Paris, where we are giving a mission.<sup>3</sup> I did not notify you of my departure because it was a little sooner than I had expected and I was reluctant to upset you by letting you know about it. Well now! Our Lord will use this little mortification to advantage if He wishes, and He Himself will act as your director. Yes, He will surely do so, and in such a way that He will lead you to see that it is He Himself. Be then His dear daughter — quite humble, submissive, and full of confidence — and always wait patiently for the manifestation of His holy and adorable Will.

In this place where we are, one-third of the inhabitants are heretics. Please pray for us; we need it, especially myself.

I am not answering all your letters because I am no longer in a situation where I can do what you request.

### 13. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY<sup>1</sup>

[October or November 1626]<sup>2</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Your letter arrived after I had left Paris and was forwarded to me

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*Mademoiselle.* (Cf. Chevalier de Courcelles, *Histoire généalogique et héraldique des pairs de France* [12 vols., Paris, 1822-1823].) By her marriage, Louise de Marillac had become "Mademoiselle" Le Gras.

<sup>2</sup>A small place in Marne.

<sup>3</sup>At that time, Saint Vincent's associates in his mission work were Antoine Portail, Louis Callon, François du Coudray, and Jean de la Salle. One of these Missionaries was with him in Loisy.

**Letter 13.** - Reg. I, f<sup>o</sup> 4 v<sup>o</sup>. The copyist notes that the original was in Saint Vincent's own handwriting.

<sup>1</sup>A woman of eminent piety, entirely devoted to Saint Vincent, whom she assisted with her wealth. If a troublesome infirmity — one of her legs was two or three times larger than the other — had not prevented her, she would have taken a much more active role in the Saint's work. Her paternal uncle, René Hennequin, had married Marie de Marillac, Saint Louise's aunt.

<sup>2</sup>A comparison of this letter with no. 12 convinces us that the two were written within a few days of each other, perhaps on the same day.

here in Loisy-en-Brie, where we are trying to work among a great number of people of the religion.<sup>3</sup> We need prayers in order to strengthen the Catholics who remain; we hope for nothing from the others, because they are not in circumstances in which they can avail themselves of our preaching.

Moreover, I gave you no notice of my departure. Will you not forgive me for that? But tell me please, how did your heart take it? Did it not give mine a severe scolding? Well now, I hope they will be reconciled within the one which encompasses them, which is Our Lord's.

I am not giving you an answer concerning your proposal about returning to Paris, because I imagine that you have already done so. With regard to the matter you wish to share with me, as you so kindly told me in your letter, please let it wait for my return. If the decision is urgent, do what Our Lord Himself advises you; if not, please wait for my return, as I said.

*Mon Dieu!* how different your director's daughters are: one full of respect for the defense of the Church, and the other fully confident that she is right about the Poissy<sup>4</sup> affair! Have courage! Our Lord is honored equally by both of them from what I see of your community, to whose Mother<sup>5</sup> I send my regards.

Meanwhile, remain quite cheerful, Mademoiselle, I beg of you.

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<sup>3</sup>Huguenots.

<sup>4</sup>The Dominican nuns had a famous boarding school in Poissy (Yvelines). Saint Louise had spent some time there in her youth under the direction of her father's first cousin, who composed several bits of poetry, and of the Prioress. Jeanne de Gondi. Louise de Gondi, the latter's niece, had succeeded her. This election was contested for a long time, although its validity had been recognized by the King, by Father Siccus, General of the Dominicans, and by the Pope himself. In 1625, Father Siccus drew up new statutes which he had approved by the Holy See. Article 5 stated "that Mother Louise de Gondi, the present Prioress, is to remain in office, according to the apostolic concession granted her; but should she resign or die, a new prioress is to be elected by the Sisters with active voice, according to the statutes and rules of the Council of Trent, and of our constitutions and general chapters. This prioress, thus elected and confirmed by the provincial, is to have a true three-year term. This should be henceforth and perpetually observed with regard to the election and term of office of the prioresses." This document did not silence the protesters. Interesting details concerning this affair can be found in the *Bibl. Nat.*, Joly de Fleury collection, 1475.

<sup>5</sup>Louise de Gondi. She resigned the office of prioress in 1660, and died on August 29, 1661.

To this end, honor the holy tranquillity of Our Lord's soul, and trust fully that He will direct your dear heart by the holy love of His own. In this love, I am your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

14. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

*Monsieur,*

*I hope you will forgive the liberty I am taking of expressing to you my spirit's impatience, as much with regard to the long time you have been away in the past as concerning my apprehension about the future, and about not knowing the place to which you are going after the one where you are now. It is true, Father, that thinking about the reason which takes you away brings some mitigation to my suffering, but, in my idleness, that does not keep the days from sometimes seeming like months. I wish, however, to await God's time with tranquillity, and to recognize that my unworthiness is delaying it.*

*I have been well aware that Mademoiselle du Fay, over and above her wont, is a little anxious at heart. We spent Pentecost together. After the service, she would have liked to have been free to speak to me openly, but we remained in the expectation and desire of doing God's Will.*

*The work you gave me is completed. If the members of Jesus need it and if it is your pleasure, Father, that I send it, I shall not fail to do so. I did not want to do that without your order.*

*At last, most honored Father, after a little anxiety, my son is at the collège and, thanks be to God, he is very happy and in good health. If this continues, I am greatly in favor of it.<sup>1</sup>*

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**Letter 14.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, 140 rue du Bac, Paris, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Michel Le Gras, born October 19, 1613, intended to embrace the ecclesiastical state. To encourage the vocation of her son, Saint Louise had placed him in the seminary of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, the collège spoken of here, which had been founded and was directed by the austere and virtuous Adrien Bourdoise. Michel, however, caused his mother a great deal of anxiety by the instability of his character. He ultimately abandoned the cassock at the age of twenty-seven (1640). After ten years of wavering, on January 18, 1650, he married Demoiselle Gabrielle Le Clerc in the Church of Saint-Sauveur. Saint Vincent witnessed the marriage contract.

*Father, allow me to trouble you once again about a young woman, twenty-eight [years] of age, whom they wish to bring from Burgundy in order to entrust her to me. She is intelligent and virtuous, from what they tell me. However, before her, the good blind girl from Les Vertus<sup>2</sup> told me that her companion, who is twenty-two [years] old, might perhaps come to our house. She has been under the direction of the Fathers of the Oratory for four years and is a genuine country girl. I am not sure that she wants to come; nevertheless, she has given me evidence of some desire to do so. I most humbly entreat you, Father, to let me know what I should do about this. The person who is going to Burgundy is supposed to leave on Monday and, since I was expecting you to return this week, I promised her an answer.*

*For a month now, our good God has allowed my soul more feeling for Him than usual; but I still have my imperfections. When I no longer hinder the effect of the prayers which I hope you are saying for me, I think that I shall grow better.*

*These past few days, I have really wished that you would remember to offer me to God and to ask Him for the grace of accomplishing entirely His holy Will in me, notwithstanding the opposition of my wretchedness. Therefore, Father, I present you this plea in all humility and ask your pardon for bothering you so much, for I am, by the goodness of God, Monsieur, your most grateful servant and unworthy daughter.*

L. DE MARILLAC

June 5, 1627

### 15. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 1627]<sup>1</sup>

I thank you, Mademoiselle, for notifying me of good Mademoiselle du Fay's donation. Please keep it until you need it, unless she thinks it should be set aside and reserved for going to win over poor souls to God in the regions of Poitou and the

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<sup>2</sup>A locality included today in the commune of Aubervilliers (Seine-Saint-Denis).

Letter 15. - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 77.

<sup>1</sup>It seems that this letter ought to be placed near the one that follows.

Cévennes. If that is not her intention and she wishes it to be used for the poor of this area, be so kind as to forward it to me and send three shirts to Mademoiselle Lamy<sup>2</sup> in Gentilly<sup>3</sup> for the Charity<sup>4</sup> of that place.

I am writing to you at about midnight and am a little tired. Forgive my heart if it is not a little more expansive in this letter. Be faithful to your faithful lover who is Our Lord. Also be very simple and humble. And I shall be, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother. . . .

#### 16. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Vermeuil,<sup>1</sup> October 8, 1627

Mademoiselle,

Since, therefore, your good lady wishes that her present material donation not hinder a spiritual one in the future, and that we distribute what she gave you<sup>2</sup> right now, I beg you to send us by M. du Coudray,<sup>3</sup> the bearer of this letter, the sum of fifty livres.

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<sup>2</sup>Catherine Vigor, wife of Antoine Lamy, Auditor in the Chambre des Comptes [sovereign court for the examination, registration, and auditing of taxes], was president of the Confraternity of Charity in Gentilly. Antoine Lamy and his wife founded a mission in that locality and also in Ferreux on December 30, 1634.

<sup>3</sup>A district situated at the gates of Paris.

<sup>4</sup>The Confraternities of Charity, or more simply, the Charities, were composed of volunteer women and girls, who joined together in order to come to the assistance of the needy. Begun in Châtillon-les-Dombes (Ain) in 1617, this organization responded so well to the needs of the population that Vincent de Paul set it up on the De Gondi estates in Villepreux, Folleville, Joigny, Montmirail, and everywhere he went to give missions. The regulations varied a little according to the localities. From this work was born the Company of the Daughters of Charity. In some places, the Charities of women were complemented by Charities of men.

**Letter 16.** - Pémartin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 21.

<sup>1</sup>Near Creil, in Oise.

<sup>2</sup>Donation which Mademoiselle du Fay had given Saint Louise.

<sup>3</sup>Subsequently, we shall meet the name of François du Coudray quite often. He was born in 1586 in the city of Amiens, was ordained a priest in September 1618, and in March 1626 he was received into the Congregation of the Mission, of which the only other members were as yet

Kindly assure her for me that Our Lord Himself will return good measure to her, and that I have begun to make practical use of four of them since I have been here to bring about the foundation of the Charity which is being set up here. We find great temporal needs joined to spiritual ones, because of the large number of Huguenots there are — rich people — using a few comforts given to the poor to corrupt them, thus doing unspeakable harm. Please send us also four shirts, and convey our most humble respects to your good lady. Kindly assure your own heart that, provided it honors the holy tranquillity of that of Our Lord in His love, it will be pleasing to Him. I am, in this same love. . . .<sup>4</sup>

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, rue Saint-Victor, at the house in which M. Tiron Saint-Priest<sup>5</sup> used to live

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Saint Vincent and Antoine Portail. He was gifted with extraordinary intelligence and knew Hebrew well enough to be judged capable of doing a new translation of the Bible.

It was he whom the Saint chose to go to Rome to negotiate the approbation of the nascent Congregation. He remained there from 1613 to 1635. We find him next in Paris; from there he went into various areas to relieve the poor, to assist soldiers, or to give missions. In 1638, the Saint confided to him the direction of the house of Toul, which he retained until 1641. He was recalled to Saint-Lazare in 1641, spent part of the year 1643 in Marseilles evangelizing the galley slaves and founding a house in that city, and in 1644 he took over the direction of the house in La Rose (Lot-et-Garonne).

Unfortunately, his vast erudition was not accompanied by sufficiently solid theological knowledge. He maintained some unorthodox opinions and persevered in them despite the admonitions given him. The measures that Saint Vincent was obliged to take to prevent him from spreading his errors darkened the last years of his life. In 1646, he went from the La Rose house to Richelieu. There he ended his days in February 1649, in his sixty-third year.

<sup>4</sup>M. Pémarin felt that he could dispense with repeating the closing and signature at the end of each letter.

<sup>5</sup>This address is taken from the *Histoire de Mademoiselle Le Gras* by the Comtesse de Richemont, Paris, 1883, p. 46, n. 2.



17. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Thank you a thousand million times for the splendid gift you sent us, Mademoiselle. I beg God to be your sole reward and to make me worthy of meriting the same through the services I am obliged to render you.

I returned last night from our mission in good health and I very much hope that you are feeling well, too. As soon as I have taken care of a few little matters that are on my mind, I shall come to thank you for the many, many fruits of your generosity. I beg you to continue it for me, Mademoiselle, and to believe that my heart receives an inexpressible consolation in the confidence that it is one with yours and that of Our Lord, and that they form but one love in that of the same Lord and His holy Mother.

18. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Blessed be God, Mademoiselle, that you are feeling better! You will be most welcome to communicate tomorrow at Monsieur de la Salle's<sup>1</sup> Mass. I am obliged to say mine in the morning because of a priests' meeting taking place here tomorrow morning which

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**Letter 17.** - Reg. I, f<sup>o</sup> 24. The copyist notes that he took his text from a rough draft in Saint Vincent's handwriting.

**Letter 18.** - Autograph letter. According to Coste, the original was at the Provincial House of the Daughters of Charity in Naples. The present location of the letter is unknown.

<sup>1</sup>Jean de la Salle, whom Saint Vincent calls a "great missionary" and whom the Bishop of Beauvais considered the "most gifted expositor" he had ever known (Conference of Saint Vincent, August 5, 1659 - cf. vol. XII, no. 210), was born in Seux (Somme), September 10, 1598, and offered his services to Saint Vincent in April 1626. In 1631, he was preaching in Champagne; in 1634, 1635, and 1636, he was working in Gironde and the surrounding areas. When the internal seminary of Saint-Lazare opened in June 1637, he was entrusted with its direction. The following year he returned to his missions, after which he was engaged in the ordinands' retreats until the end of his life. He died October 9, 1639, much regretted by Saint Vincent, who lost in him one of his best workers.

will last until noon.<sup>2</sup> I am not so much afraid of the chapel now as in the summer. If Mademoiselle Guérin<sup>3</sup> wishes to come, she will be most welcome — before I leave. I shall let you know about that.

As for the money from Mademoiselle du Fay's Charity, I gladly approve the use you wish to make of it, and I am also pleased with the decision those good young women<sup>4</sup> have made to put everything in common. I shall not fail tomorrow at Mass, miserable sinner that I am, to offer them to Our Lord, in Whose love I am your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

19. - SAINT JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL<sup>1</sup> TO SAINT VINCENT

November 1627

*So there you are, my very dear Father, occupied with your work in the province of Lyons and, consequently, here we are, deprived of seeing you for a long time. But in what God does, there is no fault to be found; rather, He is to be blessed for everything, as I am doing, my very dear Father, for the freedom you give me to continue my trust in you and to bother you. I shall do so quite simply.*

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<sup>2</sup>The work of the spiritual conferences was not definitely organized until later, in 1633. We may believe, however, that from time to time conferences were given before that date in the Collège des Bons-Enfants. We know that many priests, attracted by Bourdoise and Le Féron, used to meet there to converse even before Saint Vincent took possession of the buildings. (Cf. P. Schoenher, *Histoire du Séminaire de Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet* [2 vols., Paris: Desclée, 1909-1911], vol. I, p. 97.)

<sup>3</sup>Wife of Gilles Guérin, Councillor of the King and Auditor of Accounts. She lived on the rue Saint-Victor, quite near the Collège des Bons-Enfants.

<sup>4</sup>Probably the members of the Charity.

**Letter 19.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. VII, 1st ed., p. 315.

<sup>1</sup>In November 1627, Saint Jane Frances was on her way to Orléans; she arrived in Paris in January and did not leave until May. Jane Frances (Jeanne-Françoise) Frémot, born in Dijon on January 23, 1572, had four children from her marriage with the Baron de Chantal.

Widowed very young, she placed herself under the guidance of Saint Francis de Sales, and

*Well, I have made four days of retreat, and no more, because of several business matters that came up unexpectedly. I saw the need I have to work at humility and tolerance of my neighbor, virtues that I had taken last year and that Our Lord has given me the grace to practice a little. But He is the One Who did everything and Who will do so again, if He chooses, since He gives me so many opportunities.*

*As for my state, it seems to me that I am simply awaiting what God will be pleased to do with me. I have no desires nor plans. Nothing is keeping me from allowing God to act. I do not yet see it, but it seems to me that this is what is in the depths of my soul. I have neither opinion nor feeling with regard to the future, but, at present, I am doing what I think it is necessary to do, without thinking any further.*

*Often, everything is stirred up in the inferior part, causing me to suffer a great deal. And there I am, knowing that with patience I shall possess my soul. Moreover, I have many difficulties on account of my office, because my spirit greatly detests action, and when I force myself to act in a case of necessity, my body and spirit are left disconsolate. My imagination, on the other hand, gives me a lot of trouble during all my exercises, and with rather great annoyance. Our Lord is also permitting me to have a number of difficulties exteriorly, so that nothing in this life is pleasing to me except the Will of God alone which wishes me to be here. May God be merciful to me, which I beg you to earnestly ask of Him. I shall not fail to pray to Him, as I am doing with all my heart, that He will strengthen you for the responsibility He has given you.*

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with him established the Order of the Visitation. The foundation of the first monastery in Paris drew her to that city where she remained from 1619 to 1622. There she became acquainted with Saint Vincent whom she requested of Jean-François de Gondy (Archbishop of Paris) as Superior of her daughters. Until her death in Moulins, December 13, 1641, on her return from a trip to Paris, she kept in close contact with this holy priest whom she liked to consult for her spiritual direction and with regard to the business affairs of her community. (Cf. Henri de Maupas du Tour, *La Vie de la Vénérable Mère Jeanne-Françoise Frémot* [new ed., Paris: Siméon Piget, 1653].)

20. - A PRIEST<sup>1</sup> TO SAINT VINCENT

December 1627

*I am back from a long journey through four provinces. I have already told you about the good reputation being spread, through the provinces where I have been, by the implantation of your holy Company which is working for the instruction and improvement of the rural poor. Truly, I do not believe that there is anything in the Church of God more edifying or more worthy of those who bear the mark and order of Jesus Christ. We must beg God to infuse His spirit of perseverance into a project which is so advantageous for the good of souls, to which so few of those who are dedicated to the service of God apply themselves as they ought.*

21. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

*Monsieur,*

*About three weeks ago, while I was at Mademoiselle du Fay's house, I found an opportunity to write to you, but I am afraid that my letters have been lost. The main topic was some advice that I was asking you with regard to my son. But now, Monsieur, I am no longer in the same position; for, whether God does not wish him to make a decision right now about becoming a priest, or whether the world is standing in the way, his fervor is much diminished. Seeing such a great change of mind in him, I spoke freely about it to the Mother Superior.<sup>1</sup> She advised me to place him merely as a boarder with those good clergymen,<sup>2</sup> for reasons which I shall tell you if God gives me the grace of seeing your return, of which I have great need.*

*I have certainly never felt your absence more keenly, because of the needs I have had since you left. In this I must admit my weakness, assuring you, Father, that if God gives me the grace to recall the past, I*

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Letter 20. - Abelly, *op. cit.*, bk. II, chap. I, sect. 2, par. 8, 1st ed., p. 49.

<sup>1</sup>A "very well known" priest, says Abelly.

Letter 21. - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, 140 rue du Bac, Paris, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Probably Mother Louise de Gondi, Prioress of the Dominican Nuns in Poissy, with whom Mademoiselle du Fay seems to have had a place to live.

<sup>2</sup>At the seminary of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.

*shall have no reason to boast. I ask strength from the help of your prayers, for the love of God, and I thank you most humbly for the trouble you took to write me and for the expressions of the honor of your remembrance. I do not deserve it, and God is very good to put up with me. Now, my dearest Father, offer my will to the Divine Mercy, for I wish to be converted and to call myself truly, Monsieur, your most humble servant and unworthy daughter in Our Lord.*

L. DE MARILLAC

*January 13, 1628*

*Mademoiselle du Fay is still ill in body and has been in bed almost continually for two weeks; without a fever, however. She is most eager for your return.*

Addressed: *Monsieur Vincent*

## 22. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I do not know how I had imagined these past few days that you were ill, and so I kept on thinking of you in that condition. But, may God be blessed that your letter assured me of the contrary!

What shall I say to you now about your son, except that, just as we were not to put too much trust in the affection he used to have for the community,<sup>1</sup> we must also not be troubled about the different feeling he has now. Leave him alone then, and surrender him completely to what Our Lord wills or does not will. It rests with Him alone to direct these tender souls. He is also more interested in this than you, because he belongs more to Him than to you.

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**Letter 22.** - The original autograph letter was formerly at the house of the Daughters of Charity, 15 rue des Bernardins, Paris. They received it from M. Duby, a former Pastor of the parish. It had probably belonged at one time to the monks of Saint-Victor Abbey. The letter is now in the Archives of the Mission, 95 rue de Sèvres, Paris.

<sup>1</sup>The seminary of Saint Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.

When I have the pleasure of seeing you, or more time than at present to write to you, I shall tell you the thought that came to me one day and which I shared with Madame de Chantal concerning this matter. It consoled her and, by the mercy of God, freed her from a sorrow similar to that which you may be suffering.<sup>2</sup> Until we next see each other then. And if your other difficulty troubles you, write to me about it and I shall answer you.

Meanwhile, get ready to do an act of charity for two poor girls whom we have decided should leave here. We shall send them to you from here in a week's time and ask you to direct them to some good woman who can find them work as servants, unless you know some upright lady who may need them.

We shall still have work here for about six weeks; after that I shall give you and Mademoiselle du Fay all my attention. I greet her with the fullness of my heart and pray God that I may find you in good health. I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Joigny,<sup>3</sup> January 17, 1628

### 23. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I sent one of the girls about whom I spoke to you<sup>1</sup> to our good

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<sup>2</sup>Celse-Bénigne, the son of Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, died fighting the English on the Ile de Ré, July 22, 1627. All his life, he was a worry to his mother, especially because of his passion for duels.

<sup>3</sup>Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, General of the Galleys, was the Comte de Joigny, where Saint Vincent had founded his third Confraternity of Charity. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. X, 1st ed., p. 47.)

**Letter 23.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, 140 rue du Bac, Paris, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>See no. 22.

Mademoiselle du Fay because she has confidence in her; the other one stayed in Joigny and has gone into service. Perhaps the said lady will think it proper for her to stay with you for a few days while she is waiting. If so, I have no doubt that you will agree and that you will recognize the confidence with which I act towards you.

I am not saying anything to you concerning the matter about which you wrote to me, because I hope to see you towards the end of this month and talk about it face to face.

What might you say, my dear daughter, about the task that fell to me during our mission on one of Monsieur de Vincy's<sup>2</sup> estates? Indeed, while hearing the confessions of these good people, I seem to see before me their good Mademoiselle,<sup>3</sup> whom they love so much. As I was not expecting to be able to write to you, I asked her, in the letter that I wrote to her, to ask you to send us a dozen shirts of all kinds. Please do so, therefore, Mademoiselle, and be quite cheerful in the disposition of willing everything that God wills.<sup>4</sup> And because it is His good pleasure that we remain always in the holy joy of His love, let us remain in it and attach ourselves to it inseparably in this world, so that we may be one day but one in Him, in Whose love I am, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Villicien,<sup>5</sup> February 9, 1628

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<sup>2</sup>Antoine Hennequin, Sieur de Vincy, priest brother of Mademoiselle du Fay, died in 1645, after being received into the Congregation of the Mission. He was a great friend of Saint Vincent.

<sup>3</sup>Mademoiselle du Fay.

<sup>4</sup>The Saint was thinking no doubt about the anxiety Saint Louise was experiencing with regard to her son's vocation. "Be cheerful," is the advice he never ceases to give her.

<sup>5</sup>A small place near Joigny.

24. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[February 1628]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

These few lines will be to thank you for having taken that good young woman into your home, for the twelve shirts that you sent me, and to tell you [that I am going]<sup>2</sup> to go away, and will be back in a week, God willing, and then we shall talk about everything. However, I am telling your heart in advance that I praise God because it has freed itself from the excessive attachment it had to the little one,<sup>3</sup> and because you have made it correspond to reason. There is no danger [now], unless you act [according to] its inclination and have him enter the clerical state.<sup>4</sup> God grant that this be for His glory and the salvation of souls and may He give you a share in the holy tranquillity of His spirit. I am, in His love, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Paris

25. - COMMANDER DE SILLERY TO SAINT VINCENT

(Now 60a.)

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**Letter 24.** - Autograph letter. The original is at the house of the Daughters of Charity, 20 rue Mage, Toulouse.

<sup>1</sup>This letter followed no. 23 by a few days.

<sup>2</sup>The original is damaged here and in two other places.

<sup>3</sup>Little Michel.

<sup>4</sup>Claude Lancelot of Port-Royal, a fellow student of Michel at the seminary of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, stated in his *Mémoires (Mémoires touchant la vie de Monsieur de Saint-Cyran* [2 vols., Cologne, 1738], vol. I, p.3), with some exaggeration perhaps, that not one seminarian of his time persevered.



## 26. - TO POPE URBAN VIII

[June 1628]

To our most Holy Father the Pope,

Vincent de Paul, Superior of the Priests of the Mission founded in Paris, Master Louis Callon, Doctor of the Sorbonne,<sup>1</sup> Antoine Portail,<sup>2</sup> François du Coudray, Jean de la Salle, Jean

**Letter 26.** - Autograph letter. Archives of the Propaganda, III, *Lettere di Francia, Avignone, Svizzera*, 1628, n° 130, p° 31. Coste published the Latin original. This document was discovered after patient research by Father Jean Parrang, C.M. It is on parchment in very beautiful handwriting and covers five pages. The Apostolic Nuncio in France sent and endorsed this request to the Cardinal-Prefect of the Propaganda on June 21, 1628. On July 23, he sent Bishop Ingoli, Secretary of the same Congregation, two letters from the King—one to the Pope, the other to the Ambassador of France, M. de Béthune—in support of the request presented by Saint Vincent, and he urged that it be adopted. These recommendations came to naught. At a meeting held in the presence of the Pope on August 22, 1628, the petition was rejected by the Propaganda because of the unfavorable report given by Cardinal Bentivoglio. At most, they appeared disposed to authorize, for France alone, a society of twenty to twenty-five priests, which would bear neither the title of congregation nor that of confraternity, and would be dependent upon the bishops.

<sup>1</sup>According to Father Placide Galleman (*La vie du vénérable prestre de J.-C. M. Jacques Galleman* [Paris: C. Couterot, 1653], p. 231), Louis Callon, Doctor of the Sorbonne, was one of those men "in whom holiness, learning, zeal, and simplicity were beautifully allied." To these gifts were added those of fortune, for his parents had left him fifty to sixty thousand livres, a large sum for that period. In July 1626, he left the pastorate of Aumale, his native place, to enter the Congregation of the Mission. After a rather short stay at the Collège des Bons-Enfants, he returned to Aumale with the consent of Saint Vincent who continued to regard him as one of his own men. The good he did in Aumale was considerable. He established a collège in his paternal home, bought a house for a girls' school, assisted the parish church, the hospital, and the convent for penitent religious, The Feuillants [a branch of Cistercians] of Rouen and other communities likewise benefited from his generosity. On August 23, 1629, he gave Saint Vincent four thousand livres to establish missions which were to be given every two years by two priests of the Congregation in the dioceses of Rouen, and more particularly in the deanery of Aumale. He himself preached in the dioceses of Rouen, Paris, Meaux, Chartres, and Senlis. In the midst of his labors, he found time to write various works of piety, among others a *Traité pour la préparation à la sainte communion* (Rouen: Laur-Maurry, n.d.) and *Le catéchisme de la chasteté honorable* (Paris: Thierry, 1639). Conscious that his end was near, he left Rouen to go to die at Saint-Lazare, but his illness prevented him from getting beyond Vernon, where he died August 26, 1647, in the convent of the religious of the Third Order of Saint Francis. Father Placide Galleman, his friend, dedicated a few pages to him in his biography of Jacques Galleman. (*Op. cit.*, pp. 319-328.)

<sup>2</sup>Antoine Portail, born in Beaucaire on November 22, 1590, came to Paris to study at the Sorbonne. He made the acquaintance of Saint Vincent there around 1612 and became devoted to him. From the day of his ordination (1622) to that of his death (1660), he was the Saint's

Bécu,<sup>3</sup> Antoine Lucas,<sup>4</sup> Joseph Brunet,<sup>5</sup> and Jean Dehorgny<sup>6</sup> from the dioceses of Dax, Rouen, Arles, Amiens, Paris, Clermont, and Noyon humbly submit this petition presenting for consideration the following facts:

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auxiliary. Vincent employed him first in the service of the galley slaves, received him before any other into his new Congregation, initiated him into the ministry of the missions and the work with the ordinands, chose him as first Assistant in 1642, and entrusted to him the direction of the Daughters of Charity. Antoine Portail left Paris in 1646 to make visitations in the houses of his Congregation. He began in the West of France, then went south, crossed into Italy, and did not return to Saint-Lazare until September 1649. Except for a fairly long absence in 1655, he hardly ever left the Motherhouse again. We are indebted to him for a new edition of the *Méditations* of Busée, which he revised and expanded considerably. He died on February 14, 1660, after an illness of nine days. (*Notices sur les prêtres, clercs et frères défunts de la Congrégation de la Mission* [10 vols. in two series. Paris: Dumoulin, 1881-1911], 1st series, vol. I, pp. 1-94.)

<sup>3</sup>Jean Bécu was from Braches (Somme), where he was born on April 24, 1592. He was ordained a priest in September 1616, and in September 1626 came to join the first companions of Saint Vincent. Two of his brothers, Benoît and Hubert, followed him into the Congregation, the latter as a lay brother, and one of his sisters became a Daughter of Charity. He was Superior of the house in Toul from 1642 to 1646. Returning to Paris, he spent the rest of his life there. He died January 19, 1667, having been Vice-Visitor, then Visitor of the Province of France. (*Notices*, 1st series, vol. I, pp. 125-133.)

<sup>4</sup>Antoine Lucas, born in Paris, January 20, 1600, had pursued higher studies at the Sorbonne. He entered the Congregation of the Mission in December 1626, and was ordained a priest in September 1628. His zeal, his talent for preaching, and his skill in debate made him much appreciated by Father de Condren and by Jean-Jacques Olier, who one day asked Saint Vincent for him for his personal instruction and for the conversion of a heretic. Antoine Lucas was in the house of La Rose in 1645, directed the house in Le Mans from 1647 to 1651, and was then placed in Sedan. He died in November 1656, a victim of his zeal among the plague-stricken. (*Notices*, 1st series, vol. I, pp. 135-146.)

<sup>5</sup>Jean-Joseph Brunet was born in Riom in 1597, joined the companions of Saint Vincent in 1627, gave missions in Bordelais, and was stationed in Alet, Genoa, and Marseilles, where he died August 6, 1649, a victim of his dedication to the plague-stricken. (*Notices*, 1st series, vol. I, pp. 147-151.)

<sup>6</sup>Jean Dehorgny, from Estrées-Saint-Denis (Oise), entered the Congregation of the Mission in August 1627, and was ordained a priest April 22, 1628. In 1632, when Saint Vincent went to live at Saint-Lazare, Jean Dehorgny took over the direction of the Collège des Bons-Enfants, which he retained until 1635 and took up again from 1638 to 1643 and from 1654 to 1659. He was Assistant to the Superior General from 1642 to 1644, and again from 1654 to 1667; Superior of the house in Rome from 1644 to 1647 and from 1651 to 1653; and Director of the Daughters of Charity from 1660 to 1667. In 1640, 1641, 1643, 1644, 1659, and 1660, he visited several houses of the Company and reestablished good order wherever necessary. His sympathy for Jansenist ideas merited for us two beautiful letters from Saint Vincent, who had the joy of seeing him return to sounder beliefs. He lived until July 7, 1667. Still extant are twenty-three of his conferences to the Daughters of Charity and several letters. (*Notices*, 1st series, vol. I, pp. 153-220.)

Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, Comte de Joigny, Marquis des Isles d'Or, knight of the two orders,<sup>7</sup> Councillor of the King, captain of fifty men-at-arms, Lieutenant General for the King of France in the seas of the Levant, Intendant General of the Royal Gallies, recently received into the Congregation of the Oratory of Jesus in the said city of Paris, and the late Dame Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, his wife and Baronne de Montmirail, Trosnay, and other places, together with the above-mentioned Vincent de Paul, at that time their chaplain and confessor of the said Dame, had given serious thought for some years to the fact that while the inhabitants of the cities are sufficiently provided with every spiritual assistance by distinguished doctors and good religious living everywhere in these cities, the people of the countryside, oppressed by ignorance and poverty, are deprived of this same assistance so abundant in the cities and, therefore, these people remain ignorant of the mysteries of faith necessary for salvation even to their old age. Thus they often die miserably in the sins of their youth because they are ashamed to confess them to their pastors or curates, whom they know and with whom they are familiar. In view of this, the above-mentioned couple thought that some remedy for such an urgent evil could be found in the benefit of the missions which were then given in the towns and villages of their estates by the petitioner Vincent de Paul and other approved ecclesiastics known for their doctrine and moral integrity, with the authority of the Most Reverend local Bishops.

The success of these missions was so great that, when they heard of and personally witnessed the profit and the increase to the glory of almighty God which resulted from them, on account of the fact that many towns and entire villages gladly made general confessions of their whole life, amending their lives and practicing greater virtue, and that even some heretics were converted and received into the holy Roman Church, the above-mentioned noble couple decided to perpetuate this holy work of the missions. They

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<sup>7</sup>The Orders of Saint-Michel and of the Saint-Esprit.

did this in the year of Our Lord one thousand six hundred twenty-five, when they gave, by way of an alms, the sum of forty-five thousand francs for the support and nourishment of a few priests who, having first left all the benefices and offices which they held in the cities and having given up even the hope of acquiring them in the future, had decided to live together in community and willed to devote themselves entirely to the salvation of the poor country people under the direction of the said petitioner Vincent de Paul.

Once this foundation had been approved and confirmed by the Most Reverend Archbishop of Paris, this Vincent de Paul, appointed Superior by the same Archbishop, associated to himself and brought together the above-mentioned priests.<sup>8</sup> In order to devote themselves more easily and effectively to the salvation of the poor country people, these priests left the benefices which some of them were enjoying and others the offices which detained them in the cities. They came together and formed a society in which they live under the title and by the name of *Priests of the Mission* or *Missionaries*. They live under the direction and correction of this Vincent de Paul, devoting themselves entirely to the salvation of people dwelling in the country. For this purpose they go from town to town, passing from village to village, preaching sermons and exhortations to the people. They teach everyone, both publicly and privately, the catechism and the mysteries of faith necessary for salvation, of which most of the people are completely ignorant. They prepare them for general confessions of their whole life and hear them. They convert heretics, bring lawsuits and quarrels to an end, appease enmities and hatreds, and establish the Confraternity of Charity where it is necessary for the corporal and spiritual relief of the sick poor. With the help of God, they are now carrying out all these pious works, not only in the villages and towns belonging to the noble founders — places

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<sup>8</sup>All the signers of this petition were priests except Antoine Lucas, who became one three months later.

which they must visit every five years and perform the aforesaid ministries — but they have also labored successfully in many other parts and dioceses of this Kingdom of France, as in the Archdiocese of Sens and in the dioceses of Châlons, in Champagne, of Troyes, Soissons, Beauvais, Amiens, and Chartres, always to the great satisfaction of the Most Reverend Archbishops and Bishops of these places, bringing about the salvation of the poor and the incredible edification of all. They always undertake all these holy works at the expense of the said Congregation, which does not receive or expect any temporal payment or compensation for its work.

For these reasons, Most Holy Father, and because the perpetuity of this holy work can contribute so much to the salvation and conversion of the people, may it please Your Holiness to approve and confirm this Congregation. And insofar as necessary, may you be pleased to establish it anew, to extend your blessing upon it, and to appoint the above-mentioned Vincent founder and Superior General of these priests, and also of any others who wish to join their society, as well as of those who are necessary for the domestic employments<sup>9</sup> of this Congregation called *of the Mission*, who might wish to live together devoutly in the society and offer and give service to the Most High in a spirit of humility and in the pursuit of a holy life. Their first and foremost purpose will be to strive for their own perfection and to devote themselves entirely to the country people.

May Your Holiness deign to grant to this same Vincent, whom

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<sup>9</sup>These words refer to coadjutor brothers. The only brothers in the Company at that time were Jean and Hector Jourdain.

Jean Jourdain, born in Gallius-la-Queue in 1587, was the first coadjutor brother in the Congregation of the Mission, which he entered on February 13, 1627. He was equerry and majordomo at the home of the Marquise de Maignelay, Marguerite de Gondi, when Saint Vincent was chaplain to the De Gondis, and the two had begun to get acquainted at that time. Of a lively temperament, Brother Jean Jourdain was inclined to give admonitions at every turn, but he quickly repented and those whom he had offended saw him on his knees before them a moment later. He died April 25, 1657. (*Notices*, 1st series, vol. 1, pp. 373-375.)

Hector Jourdain, a native of Amiens, was about thirty years of age when he entered the Congregation of the Mission in September 1627. (*Notices*, 1st series, vol. 1, p. 493.)

the Archbishop of Paris has already chosen for this work and whom the founders earnestly desired, the permission, power, and full and entire authority to establish the aforesaid Congregation of this kind in the city of Paris, as well as in all other cities, towns, estates, and places to which the local Bishops might call him, and there only.<sup>10</sup> And finally, in view of securing the good order and direction of the persons and the spiritual and temporal goods of this same Congregation or the congregations which will be established in this same manner,<sup>11</sup> with regard to the reception and admission, number, age, and qualifications of those to be received and admitted into the Congregation, their instruction and discipline, the exercise and the manner and form of divine offices, prayers, meditations, and other suffrages to be recited, and other matters useful and necessary for these congregations, authorization is also asked to make, issue, and impose on these congregations any statutes, ordinances, and other regulations which are licit and proper, and in no way contrary to the sacred canons, apostolic constitutions, and decrees of the Council of Trent, subsequently to be approved and confirmed by the Holy Apostolic See, and to be obeyed and observed by the Superior of these congregations, the priests, officials, ministers, and coadjutor brothers, with the addition of penalties. And once they have been made, issued, and imposed, whenever it shall be seen by the nature and change of circumstances and times that such is required, authorization is asked to correct, limit, change, and alter them, and even to make and impose entirely new norms to be obeyed and observed. By the same authority, may he be commissioned and appointed to do and to transact all and each one of the other things which the founders and other Superiors, even Superiors General of similar Congregations or of any approved Orders

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<sup>10</sup>At that time, the Congregation of the Mission had no establishment except the Collège des Bons-Enfants.

<sup>11</sup>Throughout this petition, congregation(s) refers to houses of the Congregation of Priests of the Mission which might be established in other cities.

may usually do or transact, either by law or custom, by privilege, or in any other way.

May it please Your Holiness to approve and confirm by the same authority and for always that all other congregations erected canonically in imitation of the above-mentioned by the Congregation of Paris and by the said Superior General, in whatever place that might be, shall henceforth depend on them in all things, after they have been erected by the said authority.

May it also please Your Holiness to exempt the Superior, priests, and all the members of this Congregation from the jurisdiction of their Ordinaries, and to make them dependent upon the Holy Apostolic See, in such a way, however, that these individuals shall be obliged, in what concerns the missions, to obey the Most Reverend Bishops and Ordinaries of their residence, and to go wherever and to whomever they send them without any excuse or pretext, except in case of illness or excessive fatigue resulting from previous work and necessitating some rest in order to recover their strength.

Finally, may these congregations henceforth, after they have been established and erected in the way stated above, be permitted to accept for their endowment and for the support of the said Vincent, of any other Superior General, and of the priests who are living in them at any given time, and for the discharge of the burdens incumbent upon them, all things in general and in particular, goods, fruits, income, and legacies, both those already given to the said congregations, as well as those to be given in the future either by the said founders Seigneur de Gondi and Dame Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, or by any other of the faithful as bequest, gift, or grant of any kind. Thus, may the said Vincent, or any other Superior General, or the priests of the congregations living at any given time, in the name of the said congregations, be permitted, either by themselves or through one or several other members, to appropriate freely and keep permanently the corporal, real, and actual possession of all these things. May they also demand, collect, and claim their fruits, yield, income, rights, revenues, and proceeds of any kind, and use them for the benefit

of the said congregations, applying them even in perpetuity to them, without being obliged to ask permission of the local Ordinary or of anyone else.

And in order to increase the devotion of the faithful, to procure the salvation of souls, and in order that the faithful might be encouraged to take part in the exercises given by the members of this Institute, the said petitioners implore Your Holiness to be pleased to grant them all the faculties ordinarily granted to religious and to secular priests whom Your Holiness sends on mission to pagan lands, namely:

The apostolic faculty to preach, catechize, hear confessions, establish the Confraternity of Charity in every place, always, however, with the approval of the Most Reverend Bishop;

The power to absolve from all ecclesiastical censures and to dispense from occult irregularities, to commute vows, and to absolve from all cases reserved to Your Holiness, even those contained in the Bull *In Coena Domini*;

Also the permission for the said Missionaries to read books by heretics, to absolve from heresy, and to grant a plenary indulgence to all who make general confessions to the same Missionaries or other priests chosen by them for the missions;

To hold the Forty Hours' devotion in places where they consider it useful, and to grant a plenary indulgence to all who go to confession and Communion during that time;

To celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on portable altars; to celebrate Mass even before dawn and after noon;

To reduce and remit the restitutions due for having incurred simony;

To bless church vestments.

L. CALLON, F. DU COUDRAY, A. PORTAIL, J. DE LA SALLE, J. BECU, A. LUCAS, J. BRUNET, J. DEHORGNY, VINCENT DEPAUL<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>The personnel of the nascent Congregation also included Jacques Régner, received in August 1627, and ordained a priest in 1631; two coadjutor brothers; and perhaps Robert de Sergis, received in June 1628. Jacques Régner did not sign the petition, most likely because he was not yet a priest or close to becoming one.



27. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Well yes, dear lady, I do consent. Why not, since Our Lord has given you this holy thought? Go to Communion tomorrow, then, and prepare yourself for the salutary review you have in mind; after that, you will begin the retreat you have arranged. I could not tell you how ardently my heart desires to see yours in order to know how this has come about in it, but I am quite willing to mortify myself for the love of God, in which love alone I desire yours to be immersed.

Now then, I imagine that the words of today's Gospel<sup>1</sup> touched you deeply; they are so impelling to the heart that loves with a perfect love. Oh! what a tree you have appeared to be today in God's sight, since you have borne such a fruit! May you be forever a beautiful tree of life bringing forth fruits of love, and I, in that same love, your servant.

V. D.

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**Letter 27.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter. This letter was reproduced in its entirety by Abelly, who prefaced it with these words: "This faithful servant of Jesus Christ was strongly urged during her prayer to devote herself to the service of the poor. When she asked Saint Vincent's advice, he gave her this response." (*Op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXIII, p. 105.)

Monsignor Baunard (Louis Baunard, *La Vénérable Louise de Marillac* [Paris: C. Pousielgue, 1898], p. 43, n. 1) thinks that Abelly was mistaken. According to him, the letter was probably only a simple encouragement to make a retreat that was to be accompanied by a general confession. We are inclined to agree with Abelly. Had Saint Louise been animated only by the desire to make a retreat and a review of her life, Saint Vincent would not have replied to her: "I could not tell you how ardently my heart desires to see yours in order to know how this has come about in it" and "Oh! what a tree you have appeared to be today in God's sight, since you have borne such a fruit!" There seems to be question of a serious decision that Saint Louise had just made. Abelly's explanation is more natural and is the one we are adopting.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written on the seventh Sunday after Pentecost, for it was on that day that the Gospel of the good and the bad tree was read at Mass. On the other hand, it could be conjectured that Saint Louise took the resolution of consecrating herself to the service of the poor before she offered her services to Saint Vincent to go and visit the Confraternities of Charity, consequently, before May 6, 1629. These two remarks lead us to believe that the above letter might well belong to July 30, 1628.

28. - TO POPE URBAN VIII

To our most Holy Father the Pope,

Vincent de Paul, Superior of the Priests of the Mission founded in Paris, Master Louis Callon, Doctor of the Sorbonne, Antoine Portail, François du Coudray, Jean de la Salle, Jean Bécu, Antoine Lucas, Joseph Brunet, and Jean Dehorgny from the dioceses of Dax, Rouen, Arles, Amiens, Paris, Clermont, and Noyon humbly submit this petition presenting for consideration the following facts:

Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, Comte de Joigny, Marquis des Iles d'Or, knight of the two orders, Councillor of the King, captain of fifty men-at-arms, Lieutenant General for the King of France in the seas of the Levant, Intendant General of the Royal Galleys, recently received into the Congregation of the Oratory of Jesus in the said city of Paris, and the late Dame Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, his wife and Baronne de Montmirail, Trosnay, and other places, together with the above-mentioned Vincent de Paul, at that time their chaplain and confessor of the said Dame, had given serious thought for some years to the fact that while the inhabitants of the cities are sufficiently provided with every spiritual assistance by distinguished doctors and good re-

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**Letter 28.** - Signed letter. Archives of the Propaganda, III, *Lettere di Francia, Avignone e Svizzera*, 1628, no. 130, p. 36, former 60. Coste published the Latin original. Again we owe the discovery of this document to Father Jean Parrang, C.M. While his first petition was being studied by Rome, Saint Vincent, perhaps on the advice of some learned individuals and friends, revised it and corrected it. Except for two additions, which we shall point out when they come up, the new text differs from the preceding one only by some modifications of pure form. The Nuncio sent it to the Cardinal-Prefect of the Propaganda on August 15, 1628, along with a letter of recommendation. The reasons given by this Congregation on August 22 for the rejection of the preceding request affected this one as well. Thus Saint Vincent was not surprised to learn that it had been rejected in turn. According to a notation, the decision was handed down on September 25. If the minutes of the meeting held that day do not make any mention of this, it is probably because there was no deliberation on the matter, since the second petition was virtually turned down on the grounds of the decision against the first one. Saint Vincent was not a man to be discouraged. He waited, reflected, prepared another petition (no. 94a), had influential people take action, and finally, on January 12, 1633, obtained everything that he desired. (Cf. vol. XIII, no. 81.)

ligious living everywhere in these cities, the people of the countryside, oppressed by ignorance and poverty, are deprived of this same assistance so abundant in the cities, and, therefore, these people remain ignorant of the mysteries of faith necessary for salvation even to their old age. Thus, they often die miserably in the sins of their youth because they are ashamed to confess them to their pastors or curates, whom they know and with whom they are familiar. In view of this, the above-mentioned couple thought that some remedy for such an enormous evil could be found if the missions given at that time in the towns and villages of their estates by the said Vincent and other ecclesiastics known for their integrity and doctrine should be continued, with the good pleasure and permission of the Most Reverend local Bishops.

The success of these missions was so great that, having heard of and personally witnessed the fruit and the increase to the glory of almighty God resulting from the fact that many towns and entire villages gladly made general confessions of their whole life, amending their lives and practicing greater virtue afterwards, and that even some heretics were converted, the above-mentioned nobles Emmanuel and Françoise, wishing to perpetuate this holy work of the missions, gave as an alms forty-five thousand francs in the year of Our Lord one thousand six hundred twenty-five for the support and nourishment of a few priests who, having left the positions and ecclesiastical offices which they had held in the cities, and having given up even the hope of acquiring them in the future, willed to live together in community and devote themselves entirely to the salvation of the poor country people under the direction of the said petitioner Vincent de Paul.

Once this foundation had been approved and confirmed by the Most Reverend Archbishop of Paris, this Vincent de Paul, appointed Superior by the same Archbishop, associated to himself and joined together the above-mentioned priests who, in order that they might be able to devote themselves more easily and effectively to the spiritual welfare of those living in the country, first

renounced the benefices which some of them were enjoying and other offices which detained them in the cities. They came together in a society of priests called *of the Mission* or *of the Missionaries*. They live under the direction of this Vincent de Paul and devote themselves entirely to the salvation of people living in the country. For this purpose, they go from town to town, passing from village to village, preaching sermons and exhortations to the people. They teach everyone, catechizing them both publicly and privately, about the mysteries of faith necessary for salvation, of which most of the people are completely ignorant. They prepare them for general confessions of their whole life and hear them. They convert heretics, bring lawsuits to an end, appease hatreds, reconcile quarrels and enmities, and establish the Confraternity of Charity where it is necessary for the corporal and spiritual relief of the sick poor. With the help of God, they are now carrying out all these pious works successfully not only in villages and towns belonging to the above-mentioned founders — places which they must visit every five years and perform the aforesaid ministries — but also in many other parts of this Kingdom of France, as in the Archdioceses of Paris and Sens, in the dioceses of Châlons, in Champagne, of Troyes, Soissons, Beauvais, Amiens, and Chartres, always to the great satisfaction of the Archbishops and Bishops of these places, bringing about the salvation of the poor people and the unbelievable satisfaction of all. They always undertake all these holy works at the expense of the said Congregation, which does not receive or expect any temporal payment or compensation for its work.

For these reasons, Most Holy Father, and because the perpetuity of this holy work appears to contribute so much to the salvation and conversion of the people, may it please Your Holiness to approve and confirm this Congregation. And, insofar as necessary, may you be pleased to establish it anew, to extend your blessing upon it, and to appoint the above-mentioned Vincent founder and Superior General of these priests, and also of any

others who wish to join their society, as well as of those who are necessary for the domestic employments<sup>1</sup> of this Congregation called *of the Mission*, who might wish to live together devoutly in the society and offer and give service to the Most High in a spirit of humility and in the pursuit of a holy life. Their first and foremost purpose shall be to strive for their own perfection and to devote themselves entirely to the salvation of the country people. They shall go from village to village, preaching, catechizing, and exhorting them to unburden their consciences of the sins of their entire life, hearing general confessions of penitents, instructing children for the worthy reception of their first Holy Communion, and setting up the Confraternity of Charity for the relief of the sick poor, all this free of charge, receiving no gifts either directly or indirectly.<sup>2</sup>

May Your Holiness deign to grant to this same Vincent, whom the Archbishop of Paris has already chosen for the work and whom the founders earnestly desired, the permission, power, and full and entire authority to establish this Congregation in the city of Paris, as well as in all other cities, towns, estates, and places to which the local Bishops might call him, and there only. And finally, in view of securing the good order and direction of the persons and the spiritual and temporal goods of this same Congregation or the congregations which will be established in this same manner,<sup>3</sup> with regard to the reception and admission, number, age, and qualifications of those to be received and admitted into the Congregation, their instruction and discipline, the exercises and the manner and form of divine offices, prayers, meditations, and other suffrages to be recited, and other matters useful and necessary for these congregations, authorization is also asked to make, issue, and impose on these congregations any

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<sup>1</sup>Coadjutor brothers.

<sup>2</sup>This last sentence is missing in the June petition.

<sup>3</sup>Throughout this petition, congregation(s) refers to houses of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission which might be established in other cities.

statutes, ordinances, and other regulations which are licit and proper and in no way contrary to the sacred canons, apostolic constitutions, and decrees of the Council of Trent, subsequently to be approved and confirmed by the Holy Apostolic See and to be obeyed and observed by the Superior of these congregations, the priests, officials, ministers, and coadjutor brothers, with the addition of penalties. And once they have been made, issued, and imposed, whenever it shall be seen by the nature and change of circumstances and times that such is required, authorization is asked to correct, limit, change, and alter them, and even to make and impose entirely new norms to be obeyed and observed. By the same authority, may he be commissioned and appointed to do and to transact all and each one of the other things which the founders and other Superiors, even General Superiors of similar Congregations or of any approved Orders may usually do or transact, either by law or custom, by privilege, or in any other way.

May it please Your Holiness to approve and confirm by the same authority and for always that all other congregations erected canonically in imitation of the above-mentioned by the Congregation of Paris and by the said Superior General, in whatever place that might be, shall henceforth depend on them in all things, after they have been erected by the said authority.

May it also please Your Holiness to exempt the Superior, priests, and all the members of this Congregation from the jurisdiction of their Ordinaries, and to make them dependent upon the Holy Apostolic See, in such a way, however, that these individuals shall be obliged, in what concerns the missions, to obey the Most Reverend Bishops and Ordinaries of their residence, and to go wherever and to whomever they send them, without any excuse or pretext, except in case of illness or excessive fatigue resulting from previous work and necessitating some rest in order to recover their strength. However, the choice of the priests to be sent shall be left to the Superior of the house; and to the Superior General shall be reserved the power of appointing and removing superiors and officials of the said Congregation and also of the other con-

gregations to be erected in the future, of dismissing from the congregations those who are unsuitable, likewise of transferring the said priests and others from one house to another, and of recalling them, wherever or in whichever house they may be, if the mandate of Your Holiness for some mission, or some necessity may require it.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, may these congregations henceforth, after they have been established and erected in the way stated above, be permitted to accept for their endowment and for the support of the said Vincent, of any other Superior General, and of the priests who are living in them at any given time, and for the discharge of the burdens incumbent upon them, all things in general and in particular, goods, fruits, income, and legacies, both those already given to the said congregations, as well as those to be given in the future either by the said founders Seigneur de Gondi and Dame Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, or by any other of the faithful as bequest, gift, or grant of any kind. Thus, may the said Vincent or any other Superior General, or the priests of the congregations living at any given time, in the name of the said congregations, be permitted, either by themselves or through one or several other members, to appropriate freely and keep permanently the corporal, real, and actual possession of all these things. May they also demand, collect, and claim their fruits, yield, income, rights, revenues, and proceeds of any kind, and use them for the benefit of the said congregations, applying them even in perpetuity to them, without being obliged to ask permission of the local Ordinary or of anyone else.

And in order to increase the devotion of the faithful, to procure the salvation of souls, and in order that the faithful might be encouraged to take part in the exercises given by the members of this Institute, the said petitioners implore Your Holiness to be pleased to grant them all the faculties ordinarily granted to re-

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<sup>4</sup>This passage, starting with *However, the choice*, is peculiar to this second petition and is very likely the only reason for its existence since the other changes are all of minor importance.

ligious and to secular priests whom Your Holiness sends on mission to pagan lands, namely:

To the apostolic faculty to preach, catechize, hear confessions, establish the Confraternity of Charity in every place, always, however, with the approval of the Most Reverend Bishop;

To absolve from all ecclesiastical censures and to dispense from occult irregularities, to commute vows, and to absolve from all cases reserved to Your Holiness, even those contained in the Bull *In Coena Domini*;

To debate with heretics, to absolve converts from heresy, to read their books, and to grant a plenary indulgence to all who make a general confession, not only to the Missionaries but also to the priests chosen by them for the missions in case of necessity;

To hold the Forty Hours' devotion in places where they consider it useful, and to grant a plenary indulgence to all who go to confession and Communion during that time;

To celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on portable altars; to celebrate Mass even before dawn and after noon;

To reduce and remit the restitutions due for having incurred simony;

To bless church vestments.

J. DE LA SALLE, J. BECU, DU COUDRAY, A. PORTAIL, CALLON,  
J. DEHORGNY, J. BRUNET, A. LUCAS, VINCENT DEPAUL

Given in Paris, at the Collège des Bons-Enfants, on the first day of August, in the year of Our Lord one thousand six hundred twenty-eight.



29. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1626 and May 1629]<sup>1</sup>

You are wrong, my dear daughter, in thinking that I was of the opinion that you should not accept the young lady's suggestion, because I have not given it a thought. And I have not given it a thought, because I am sure that you wish and do not wish what God wishes and does not wish, and that you are disposed to want and not want only what we tell you that God seems to want and not want. Therefore, confess your fault with regard to that thought and never let it enter your mind in the future.

Try to live content among your reasons for discontent and always honor the inactivity and unknown condition of the Son of God. That is your center and what He asks of you for the present and for the future, forever. If His Divine Majesty does not let you know, in a way that cannot be mistaken, that He wants something else of you, do not think about or let your mind become engrossed in that other matter. Leave it to me; I shall think about it enough for both of us.

But let us go on to little brother Michel. That certainly concerns me, my dear daughter. I sympathize with his sufferings and those which you also have because of your love for him. Oh, well! everything is for the best.

What shall I tell you now about the one whom your heart loves so dearly in Our Lord? He is a little better, I think, but still suffering somewhat from his slight chills. Moreover, people are suggesting to him and urging him to go to Forges<sup>2</sup> and to leave

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**Letter 29.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>We see from the content of the letter that Saint Louise had not yet decided upon her vocation and that the Congregation of the Mission was just beginning.

<sup>2</sup>Forges-les-Eaux is a town situated six leagues from Neufchâtel (Seine-Maritime). This locality possesses three mineral iron springs which are said to be quite stimulative and efficacious in cases of abdominal obstructions and dropsy. Louis XIII, Queen Anne of Austria, and Cardinal Richelieu went there in 1632. (Cf. M. Emile Magne, "Une station thermale au dix-septième: Forges-les-Eaux," *Revue hebdomadaire* [August 20, 1910], pp. 350-372.)

tomorrow. The doctor recommends it, unless an opportunity to go by carriage — which is being offered — comes about another way. Assuredly, my dear daughter, and this weighs upon me more than I could tell you, so much has to be done for a poor carcass. But if I do not do it, our men<sup>3</sup> will complain about me. They are strongly urging me to do this, because they have been told that the mineral waters did me some good in past years when I had similar illnesses. I have finally decided to offer no resistance just as I think our blessed Father<sup>4</sup> would do. If I leave, therefore, I am telling you adieu, my dear daughter, and I commend myself to your good prayers. I enjoin you to remain in the state mentioned above. Please do not tell this to anyone, because I do not know if the affair will turn out well. My heart could not hide it from yours, anymore than from our Mother's at Sainte-Marie<sup>5</sup> and Mademoiselle du Fay's.

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<sup>3</sup>The Priests of the Mission.

<sup>4</sup>Saint Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, was born August 21, 1567, in Thorens, near Annecy, and died in Lyons, December 28, 1622. He honored —aint Vincent with his friendship. "Many times I have had the honor of enjoying the close friendship of Francis de Sales," said the holy priest at the beatification process of his illustrious friend on April 17, 1628. Saint Vincent spoke of the Bishop of Geneva only in terms of admiration. He considered him worthy of the honors reserved to the saints. On his part, Saint Francis de Sales, according to Coqueret, a Doctor of the Sorbonne, used to say that "he did not know a more worthy or more saintly priest than M. Vincent." (Postulatory letter from the Bishop of Tulle, March 21, 1706.) Also, when it came to appointing a superior for the convent of the Visitation in Paris, his choice fell upon Vincent de Paul.

<sup>5</sup>It was on the advice of the Cardinal of Savoy, while they were both in Paris, that Saint Francis de Sales established a convent of the Visitation in that city. At his request, Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, occupied at that time with the foundation in Bourges, came to Paris on April 6, 1619, with three of her daughters. The Bishop of Geneva himself installed them on May 1 in a rented house in the faubourg Saint-Marcel; then, in the month of August, in more spacious quarters in the faubourg Saint-Michel. The community was moved in 1621 from the faubourg Saint-Michel to the Hôtel du Petit-Bourbon on the rue de la Cerisaie, which Saint Jane Frances had bought; and in 1628, from the Hôtel du Petit-Bourbon to the Hôtel du Cossé, rue Saint-Antoine. There, Commander Noël Brulart de Sillery had a magnificent chapel built at his expense, and personally laid the foundation stone on October 31, 1632. (Cf. *Fondation du premier monastère de la visitation Sainte-Marie de Paris*, a manuscript preserved at the Visitation of Angers; *Histoire chronologique des fondations de tout l'ordre de la Visitation de Sainte-Marie*, Bibl. Maz., ms. 2430; Félibien, *Histoire de la ville de Paris*, Paris, 1725, 5 vols., vol. III, p. 1312.)

In 1629, the first monastery was headed by Hélène-Angélique Lhuillier, born in 1592, daughter of François, Seigneur d'Interville, and Anne Brachet, Dame de Frouville, Married in

Well now, I have said enough to my daughter. I must conclude by telling her that my heart will have a very fond remembrance of hers in that of Our Lord and solely for that of Our Lord, in Whose love and in that of His holy Mother I am her most humble servant.

### 30. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

We arrived in this city three days ago, in good health, thank God. Yesterday, the examination of the ordinands<sup>1</sup> began, and it will continue today, which is Friday, and tomorrow, so that next Sunday we can begin the retreat, the initial idea for which God gave to the Bishop of Beauvais.<sup>2</sup> The schedule calls for the said

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1608 to Thomas Gobelin, Seigneur du Val, Master Ordinary of the Chambre des Comptes, she was accepted into the Visitation convent in Paris on July 2, 1620, after her marriage was annulled, and on the advice of Saint Francis de Sales. She was professed February 12, 1622, and elected Superior several times. Saint Vincent used to say that "she was one of the holiest souls he had known." (Cf. *Sainte Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot de Chantal. Sa vie et ses oeuvres* [8 vols., Paris: Plon, 1874-1880], vol. V., p. 65, note.) He put her in contact with Commander de Sillery in the hope that she would finish the work of bringing him back to God. She died March 25, 1655, at the monastery of Chaillot, 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 Tréguier.)

**Letter 30.** - Collection for the process of beatification.

<sup>1</sup>It was in July 1628, says Abelly (*op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXV, p. 117), in the course of a journey, after a conversation with Saint Vincent, that the Bishop of Beauvais decided to receive the ordinands into his home in the month of September to have them given the instruction necessary for their new state and to teach them the virtues they were to practice. The Saint prepared a written rule and came to get everything ready about two weeks before the ordination. Such was the origin of the ordinands' retreats which were to attract Bossuet, Commander de Sillery, and so many illustrious people of rank to Saint-Lazare.

<sup>2</sup>Augustin Potier, Seigneur de Blancmesnil, consecrated in Rome on September 17, 1617, renewed his diocese with the help of Saint Vincent and Adrien Bourdoise. He summoned the Ursulines to Beauvais and Clermont, had missions given in which he himself took part, established a seminary in his episcopal palace, and multiplied the Confraternities of Charity. He became Grand Almoner of the Queen, and was a member of the Council of Conscience. Named Prime Minister at the death of Louis XIII, he was going to receive the cardinal's hat

ordinands to live and lodge together at the collège,<sup>3</sup> where Monsieur Duchesne the younger<sup>4</sup> is to go and live with them and see that they observe the rule which has been prescribed for them with regard to the order of the day. The Bishop of Beauvais will open the retreat Sunday morning. Monsieur Messier<sup>5</sup> and Monsieur Duchesne<sup>6</sup> and I<sup>7</sup> are to take turns speaking, according to the subject that has been judged suitable. Monsieur Duchesne the younger and another Bachelor, the pastor here, are to teach the ceremonies required for each order. May it please Our Lord to give His holy blessing to this good work, which seems to be useful to His Church! And I entreat you to recommend it to Our Lord.

But how is the Company doing? Is everyone in good health? Is each one in good spirits? Are the little rules well observed? Is debate being studied and practiced? Do you abide by the prescribed schedule? I beg you, Monsieur, to work on that and to master the abridged Bécán.<sup>8</sup> Words cannot express the usefulness of that little book.

Since I left, God has been pleased to make use of this wretch to

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when Mazarin's influence totally did away with his. He died June 20, 1650. (Cf. Abbé Delettre, *Histoire du diocèse de Beauvais* [3 vols., Beauvais: Desjardins, 1842-1843], vol. III, pp. 377-438; cf. also Fernand Potier de la Morandière, *Augustin Potier, évêque et comte de Beauvais* [Paris: P. Féron-Vrau, 1902].)

<sup>3</sup>Le Clerc, a close friend of Bourdoise, was its director. The vacation period made it quite easy for him to put the collège at the disposal of the ordinands.

<sup>4</sup>Bernard Duchesne, Doctor of the Sorbonne, had been a member of Bourdoise's community from its beginning. He took an active part in the works of this holy man.

<sup>5</sup>Louis Messier, one of Bourdoise's first companions and his right arm, was Archdeacon of Beauvais and a Doctor of the Sorbonne. His brother was the Pastor of Saint-Landry and Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the Sorbonne.

<sup>6</sup>Jérôme Duchesne, a Doctor of the Sorbonne and a member of the community of Saint-Nicolas from 1612 on, became Archdeacon of Beauvais. In 1621, he had given a mission with Saint Vincent in Montmirail. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XIII, p. 55.)

<sup>7</sup>Saint Vincent explained the Ten Commandments. Jérôme Duchesne assisted at his conferences and was so moved by them that he felt drawn to make his general confession to the Saint. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXV, p. 118.)

<sup>8</sup>Martin Bécán, a Belgian Jesuit, wrote a great number of brief treatises against the Calvinists. In addition, he composed a *Somme théologique*, an *Analogie de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testament*, a debate manual, and an abridged form of the same manual. Bécán was very popular in his time, particularly because of his clarity and his method.

convert three people; but I must admit that meekness, humility, and patience in dealing with these poor misguided people was the essence of this good work. The first two individuals scarcely cost me anything, because they were predisposed; but I had to spend two days with the third. I wished to tell you this to my confusion, so that the Company might see that, if God has been pleased to make use of its most ignorant and wretched member, He will make much more effective use of each one in the Company.

The Bishop of Beauvais has not set the day in the month of October on which we are supposed to begin the mission in this diocese. He wants me to be at this first one, but I shall try to take the time during the interval to come and see you, in order to hear the rendering of the domestic accounts of the Company since the last one that was given, so that it might serve as a preparation for the next mission.

How is Monsieur Lucas<sup>9</sup> doing in his work? Does he like that duty? Does he return to eat and sleep at the collège?<sup>10</sup> Does he not assist at our conferences on feast days?<sup>11</sup>

Please greet our entire Company, as a group and individually, and tell Monsieur Lucas to please assure the Bishop of Bazas<sup>12</sup> of my most humble service. And you, please take care of your health and let me know if Monsieur de Saint-Martin<sup>13</sup> came to the collège and if he is going to see Monsieur de Bazas with Monsieur Lucas.

I almost forgot to tell you that I think you would do well to feel out the tailor who works at the house as to whether he has any thought of giving himself to the house.<sup>14</sup> That was his intention in

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<sup>9</sup>Antoine Lucas.

<sup>10</sup>Collège des Bons-Enfants.

<sup>11</sup>There is some doubt about the reading of these last three words.

<sup>12</sup>Jean-Jaubert de Barrault de Blaignac, Bishop of Bazas (1611-1630), then of Arles (1630-July 30, 1643).

<sup>13</sup>Jean de Saint-Martin, councillor to the diocese and judge of the Presidial Court of Dax and a compatriot of Saint Vincent.

<sup>14</sup>In 1628, no coadjutor brother entered the Congregation of the Mission.

the past, but his near-sightedness and the objection he had about sometimes doing the cooking held him back and me, as well.

Adieu, my dear little Father.<sup>15</sup> I am, in the love of Our Lord and of His holy Mother, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Beauvais, September 15, 1628

*Addressed:* Monsieur du Coudray, priest, at the Collège des Bons-Enfants, adjoining the Porte de Saint-Victor, in Paris

31. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1629]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

I wish you good evening and hope that you are no longer weeping over the happiness of your little Michel, or worrying about what will become of our sister. . . .

*Mon Dieu*, my daughter, what great hidden treasures there are in holy Providence and how marvelously Our Lord is honored by those who follow it and do not try to get ahead of it! — Yes, you will tell me, but it is on account of God that I am worried. — It is no longer because of God that you are worried if you are troubled because of serving Him.

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<sup>15</sup>The Saint gives this familiar title to François du Coudray in other letters.

**Letter 31.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 84.

<sup>1</sup>In the letters which definitely follow this date, Saint Vincent no longer calls Saint Louise "my daughter."

32. - TO SAINT LOUISE<sup>1</sup>

Oh! what great hidden treasures there are in holy Providence and how marvelously Our Lord is honored by those who follow it and do not try to get ahead of it.<sup>2</sup> I recently heard one of the great men of the kingdom say that he had learned this truth through his own experience. He had never undertaken anything on his own except four things. Instead of their working out well for him, they had turned out to his detriment. Is it not true that you wish, as is quite reasonable, that your servant not undertake anything without you and your order? And if that is reasonable from one man to another, how much more so from the Creator to the creature!

33. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1629]<sup>1</sup>

. . . Therefore, patience until then, my dear daughter, I beg you. I assure you that I thought about you again this morning for a rather long time, and that I am and shall be all my life, in the love of Jesus and His holy Mother, your servant.

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**Letter 32.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. III, chap. III, sect. III, p. 24.

<sup>1</sup>The person to whom this letter is addressed is, according to Abelly, a devout woman, the same one who received no. 53, the tone and contents of which recall the letters addressed to Saint Louise.

<sup>2</sup>We find this same sentence in no. 31. Might not these two letters be fragments of the same letter, or might not the common sentence have been interpolated in one or the other?

**Letter 33.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>See no. 31, n. 1.

34. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1629]<sup>1</sup>

*Mon Dieu*, my dear daughter, how your letter and the thoughts [you] sent to me console me! Indeed, I must confess to you that the feeling has spread through every part of my soul, and with all the more pleasure, since they let me see that you are in the state God wants of you. Well now, continue, my dear daughter, to remain in this good disposition and allow God to act. But, indeed, my consolation has been negated by the condition about which you wrote me and which you had hidden from me concerning your illness. Well now, may Our Lord be blessed for everything! Take good care of your health for love of Him.

Forgive me for having detained your man so long. I was held up by a great number of visits. Moreover, I am feeling better, thank God. I still have a slight fever, but it is steadily lessening, while the desire I have for you to be quite holy is ever increasing.

Adieu, my daughter. God grant you a good evening!

35. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1629]<sup>1</sup>

I praise God, Mademoiselle, that you have been so resigned to the holy Will of God. I beg Him that you and I may always have one and the same will with Him and in Him since such is a foretaste of Paradise. Moreover, I thank you for your good medicine. I promise you that I shall make use of it tomorrow with

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**Letter 34.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>See no. 31, n. 1.

**Letter 35.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>See no. 31, n. 1.



God's help, and willingly. I beg you, in the name of God, to get well and to omit nothing necessary for that purpose. Furthermore, be at rest with regard to your interior. It is, nonetheless, as it should be, though you do not think so now.

Adieu, my dear daughter. I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, your, etc.

### 36. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1629]<sup>1</sup>

. . . the secret of your heart, which I truly wish may belong entirely to Our Lord. I beg the Blessed Virgin to take it from you so as to carry it off to heaven to place it in her own and in that of her dear Son. But do not think that all is lost because of the little rebellions you experience interiorly. It has just rained very hard and it is thundering dreadfully. Is the weather less beautiful for that? Let the tears of sadness drown your heart and let the demons thunder and growl as much as they please. Be assured, my dear daughter, that you are no less dear to Our Lord for all that. Therefore, live contentedly in His love and be assured that I shall be mindful of you tomorrow at the sacrifice which, unworthy as I am, I shall offer to the supreme Sacrificer. If I were not in such a hurry. . . .

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**Letter 36.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter. The beginning and the end of the letter are missing.

<sup>1</sup>See no. 31, n. 1.

37. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1629]<sup>1</sup>

If it were not so late as it is, I would come and see you to find out from you the details of the matter you wrote to me about. However, that will be for tomorrow with God's help. Honor, meanwhile, the Blessed Virgin's sorrow when she saw her Son suffering. Honor as well the eternal Father's acceptance at the sight of His only Son's sufferings. I hope that He will make you see and understand how much you are obligated to His Divine Majesty for His having honored you by associating your sufferings with His, and how much flesh and blood take you away from the perfection of the true love which the eternal Father and the Blessed Virgin had for their Son. Think about that, my dear daughter, and be consoled.

I wish you a good day. May you be quite strong and may you believe that I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

38. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[April or May 1629]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you forever!

Father de Gondi<sup>2</sup> sent me word to come by coach to see him in Montmirail.<sup>3</sup> That will perhaps prevent me from having the honor

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**Letter 37.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter. On the back are found these words written in Saint Louise's hand: "Complete instructions concerning my son."

<sup>1</sup>See no. 31, n. 1.

**Letter 38.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter seems to precede no. 39 by a few days.

<sup>2</sup>Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, former General of the Galleys, entered the Oratorians on April 6, 1627.

<sup>3</sup>A small city of Brie, in Marne, which was one of the De Gondi estates. Saint Vincent had

of seeing you, because I am leaving tomorrow morning. Do you feel like coming, Mademoiselle? If so, you would have to leave next Wednesday on the coach to Châlons, in Champagne.<sup>4</sup> It is stabled at the Cardinal, opposite Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs.<sup>5</sup> And we shall have the happiness of seeing you in Montmirail.

Please let me know what is the matter at our good demoiselle's<sup>6</sup> Charity.

If I come early this evening, I shall have the happiness of a word with you; if not, I am in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

### 39. - TO SAINT LOUISE<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

I am sending you the letters and the report that you need for your journey. Go, therefore, Mademoiselle, go in the name of Our

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stayed there many times in the company of Monsieur and Madame de Gondi. In 1621, he had preached a mission there (cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XIII, p. 55), and established his fourth Confraternity of Charity (*ibid.*, chap. X, end, p. 47), whose rules we still have (cf. vol. XIII, no. 130). In 1644, the Duc de Retz founded a house of Missionaries in that locality.

<sup>4</sup>Châlons-sur-Marne.

<sup>5</sup>Saint Louise was quite familiar with the church of Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs which she had attended when she was living on the rue Cours-au-Vilain in the parish of Saint-Sauveur. It was in this church that she was delivered from serious temptations against faith and, by a kind of enlightenment from on high, had a glimpse of what God would do with her later on. (Cf. Abbé Gobillon, *La vie de Mademoiselle Le Gras* [Paris: A. Pralard, 1676], p.17.)

<sup>6</sup>Mademoiselle du Fay.

**Letter 39.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 5.

<sup>1</sup>Saint Louise was getting ready to leave for Montmirail where Saint Vincent was. This was her first apostolic journey, her first tour as a woman-missionary. (Cf. Gobillon, *op. cit.*, p. 32.) She usually traveled in the company of some devout ladies, taking with her a plentiful supply of linen and medications. As soon as she arrived in a locality that had a Confraternity of Charity, she gathered the members together, stimulated their zeal, studied the results obtained, and recruited new members. She visited the sick, distributed alms, and gathered the children together, teaching them the truths of faith. If there was a schoolteacher in the place, she gave her some practical advice; if there was not one, she trained someone. (Cf. Gobillon, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-35.)

Lord. I pray that His Divine Goodness may accompany you, be your consolation along the way, your shade against the heat of the sun, your shelter in rain and cold, your soft bed in your weariness, your strength in your toil, and, finally, that He may bring you back in perfect health and filled with good works.<sup>2</sup>

Go to Communion the day of your departure to honor the charity of Our Lord, the journeys that He undertook for this same and by this same charity, and the difficulties, contradictions, weariness, and labors that He endured in them. May He be pleased to bless your journey, giving you His spirit and the grace to act in this same spirit, and to bear your troubles in the way He bore His.

As for what you ask, whether you are to stay longer than we agreed, I think that it will be sufficient to spend one or two days in each place the first time, subject to your going back next summer if Our Lord lets you see that you can render Him some further service. Although I say two days, take more, if need be, and do us the kindness of writing to us.

With regard to Mademoiselle Guérin's Charity, please get the name of her parish. If we go to Chartres, we shall try to go and help her with the Charity since we do not know anyone in that area who is accustomed to this work.

Adieu, Mademoiselle. Remember us in your prayers and, above all, take care of your health, which I beseech God to preserve for you, being in His love. . . .

Montmirail, May 6, 1629

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<sup>2</sup>Saint Vincent took his inspiration here from this passage of the *Itinéraire des clercs*: "Be for us, Lord, a support in battle, a comfort on the road, a shady place in the heat, a covering in rain and cold, a vehicle in weariness, a defense in adversity, a staff in a slippery place, a harbor in shipwreck, so that, with You as leader, we may successfully reach the place to which we are directing our course and may return at last safe and sound to our own."

39a. - G. PLUYETTE TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

I went to your home in order to have the happiness of seeing you and talking to you about the board of my nephew, Mathieu Pluyette, a scholarship recipient of your collège.<sup>1</sup> However, the holy task in which you are employed deprived me of that happiness of being able to meet you. I have taken the liberty of sending you this note by my man, who is well known at the Collège du Cardinal,<sup>2</sup> to ask you to let me have what is due the boy who is at the Collège de Senlis. Two quarters would be due on the feast of Saint John,<sup>3</sup> if you have not given something to Denis out of that which is due at Christmas. We shall try to arrange for you to see him on the feast of Saint Remi<sup>4</sup> with regard to his staying in Paris or obtaining your consent to remain in Senlis, which will be acceptable, as I see it. I am sending you the receipt directly, without specifying the sum. For the remainder, on the feast of Saint Remi, I shall receive one from the boy. Until then, I shall remain always, Monsieur, your most humble servant,

G. Pluyette

Fontenay, July 3, 1629

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**Letter 39a.** - Signed letter. The original is in the Arch. Nat. (Paris), M 105 (Collège des Bons-Enfants). This edition uses the text published in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20 (Paris: January - June, 1970), p. 1. Throughout this edition all letters that have been discovered since the publication of Coste's original work have been placed in chronological order and a, b, c, etc., as needed, have been added to Coste's numbering to preserve his order.

<sup>1</sup>In the fifteenth century, Jean Pluyette, principal of the Collège des Bons-Enfants, established and funded two scholarships for the collège. They were to be given to members of the Pluyette family or, lacking eligible family members, to inhabitants of Mesnil-Aubry and Fontenay-en-France. (Cf. Ch. Pluyette, *Un recteur de l'Université de Paris au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, Jehan Pluyette et les fondations qu'il institua, Notice biographique et historique* [Paris, 1900].) The Pluyette Foundation provided, up to 1789, for fifty-two scholars, of whom forty-one bore the name Pluyette.

When Saint Vincent took possession of the collège des Bons-Enfants (1625), part of the revenue allocated for his maintenance and that of his Missionaries also had to support the two Pluyette scholars. However, because of the impossibility of maintaining the full value of the fund, Saint Vincent did not provide fully for Mathieu Pluyette and his cousin, Denis. The collège supplied lodgings for Foundation recipients and other pensioners until 1639.

<sup>2</sup>Collège du Cardinal Lemoine, which was very near the Bons-Enfants.

<sup>3</sup>June 24.

<sup>4</sup>October 1 is the feast of Saint Remi (or Remigius).

40. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN SAINT-CLOUD<sup>1</sup>

Paris, February 19, 1630

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I praise God that you have the health for the sixty people for whose salvation you are working, but I beg you to let me know right away whether your lung is being irritated by your talking so much, or your head by so much confusion and noise.

As for your son, I shall see him, but put your mind at rest, I beg you. You can trust that he is under the special protection of Our Lord and His holy Mother because of all the gifts and offerings you have made for him. He is also a friend of God's people and, therefore, no harm can befall him. But what shall we say about this excessive affection? I certainly think, Mademoiselle, that you have to try before God to rid yourself of it. All it does is weigh upon your spirit and deprive you of the peace Our Lord wishes in your heart and the detachment from love of everything that is not Himself. Do so, therefore, I beg you, and you will give honor to God Who is responsible for the sovereign and absolute care of your son, and Who wishes you to be concerned only in a dependent and tranquil way.

We have been back for three or four days, in good health, and

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**Letter 40.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p.6.

<sup>1</sup>We read in *Ecrits spirituels* by Saint Louise, A. 50: "On the feast of Saint Agatha, February 5, I left for Saint-Cloud. At Holy Communion, it seemed that Our Lord was inspiring me to receive Him as the Spouse of my soul, and even that this was for me a kind of espousal. I felt myself more closely united with God in this consideration, which was extraordinary for me, and the thought came to me of leaving everything to follow my Spouse, of considering Him as such from that time on, and of looking upon the difficulties I would encounter as though I were His spouse receiving them as a share in His estate. I wanted to have a Mass said that day because it was my wedding anniversary, but I refrained from doing so in order to perform an act of poverty. I wanted to be totally dependent on God in what I was going to do, without telling my confessor anything about it. He said the Mass at which I received Holy Communion. When he came out on the altar, God allowed the thought to come to him of celebrating it for me as a gift, and of saying the nuptial Mass."

our Company left today for Chelles.<sup>2</sup> I hope to go there in two days.

I sent you a young woman from Maisons<sup>3</sup> for a while. I beg you, Mademoiselle, to do her the favor I asked of you because of the one she will be able to do for you, and you will be cooperating in the salvation of two souls at the same time. Let me know if she has come to see you and when you think you will be finished in Saint-Cloud. Let me know also whether that good young woman<sup>4</sup> from Suresnes,<sup>5</sup> who visited you before and who spends her time teaching girls, has come to see you as she promised me last Sunday when she was here.

While waiting to hear from you, I beg Our Lord to strengthen you more and more, Mademoiselle, and I am in His love. . . .

#### 41. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[February 1630]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I praise God a thousand times and bless Him with all my heart for having restored you to health. I beg Him to keep you well and

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<sup>2</sup>Commune in the canton of Lagny (Seine-et-Marne).

<sup>3</sup>Maisons-Alfort, near Paris.

<sup>4</sup>Marguerite Naseau, whom Saint Vincent calls the first Daughter of Charity, and whose touching story he recounts in several of his conferences to the Sisters. (See in particular the conference of February 24, 1653 [vol. IX, no. 52].) She died in February 1633 of a malady contracted while ministering to others. The Sisters of Saint-Eloi Hospital in Montpellier gave to the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity a painting which is said to be her portrait, but there is no basis for this belief.

<sup>5</sup>A locality in the suburbs of Paris.

**Letter 41.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Two details, the presence of a team of Missionaries in Chelles and that of Saint Louise in a locality near Paris bordering on the Seine or one of its tributaries, lead us to place this letter near no. 40.

bring you home safely.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, Mademoiselle, come back towards the end of the week and even sooner if the opportunity presents itself, not by water but in a well-closed coach. Mademoiselle du Fay told me that she had not been able to find a carriage. I sent her your letter, but I have not spoken to your son for a certain reason which I shall tell you.

*Bon Dieu*, Mademoiselle, how good it is to be God's child, since He loves those who have the happiness of possessing this quality in His sight even more tenderly than you love your child — although you have more affection for him than almost any mother I know! Oh well, we shall talk about it on your return. Meanwhile, be fully confident that she to whom Our Lord has given so much love for other people's children will merit Our Lord's special affection for her own child. Please live peacefully in this assurance, even, I say, in the joy of a heart that desires to conform itself completely to that of Our Lord.

Our Little Company is in Chelles and I am still here. There is a Jesuit who is working wonders in your parish.<sup>3</sup> Mademoiselle de Villars is writing to you. I commend myself to your prayers and I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

#### 42. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1630]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

With regard to your Confraternity of Charity,<sup>2</sup> I cannot tell you

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<sup>2</sup>Saint Louise was very likely in Saint-Cloud.

<sup>3</sup>Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.

**Letter 42.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p.42.

<sup>1</sup>Date of the establishment of the Charity of Saint-Nicolas to which this letter seems to be alluding.

<sup>2</sup>Probably the Charity of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.



how much it consoles me. I beg God to bless your labor and to perpetuate this holy work. You must take care not to let the curate keep the money because of the many difficulties that might arise. I shall tell you about them some other time. Let me tell you in advance that experience has shown that, of all the methods, the surest ones that can be practiced in the Charity are those which you had in mind. If you now relieve each one at the Charity of the obligation of getting the meat cooked, you will never again be able to restore this practice. If you have it cooked elsewhere and someone undertakes to do it out of charity right now, it will become a burden to her in a short time. If you hire someone to do it, it will cost a lot. Then, with time, the ladies of the Charity will say that the woman who prepares the food should carry the pot to the sick, and in this way your Charity will be reduced to failure. Experience has shown that it is absolutely necessary for the women not to depend on the men in this situation, especially for the money.

Well now, is that not a consolation to you, Mademoiselle? After that, will you say that you are of no use to the world?

#### 43. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1630]<sup>1</sup>

. . . and know, with regard to your son, that M. du Ch.<sup>2</sup> has told me wonderful things about him. I shall tell you about them when I return. I shall also thank you for what you told me about the young woman whom I discussed with you and for having thought of her. I beg you earnestly to exert yourself on her behalf.

I am delighted with the employment of those good young

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**Letter 43.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter. The beginning of this letter is missing.

<sup>1</sup>This letter precedes the institution of the Daughters of Charity and seems to belong to the time when Michel Le Gras was studying at Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.

<sup>2</sup>Perhaps Jérôme Duchesne, one of the priests in the community founded by Bourdoise.

women<sup>3</sup> and I commend your desire to give them a painting, but not your giving way to concern over the matter. You belong to Our Lord and His holy Mother. Cling to them and to the state in which they have placed you until they make it clear that they wish something else of you, for whom I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

[Please offer my hum]ble regards to Mademoiselle du Fay and M. Bliar.

44. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1630]<sup>1</sup>

So you are a small number of workers for so much work. Oh, well! Our Lord will work with you. The suggestion that each one of you take a day to feed the sick at your own expense seems fine to me. That is how it is done elsewhere until the day the confraternity is established.

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<sup>3</sup>Perhaps some young women placed at the disposal of the ladies of a Confraternity of Charity in Paris to assist them in the service of the poor.

**Letter 44.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 41.

<sup>1</sup>Date of the establishment of the Confraternity of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet to which Saint Vincent seems to be referring.

45. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1630]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Thank you for the trouble you took to write to me about the situation of the Charity. When God is pleased to let me see you, you can tell me about the community's welfare.

It will indeed be proper for you to make use of those offerings for the needs of those poor people. I think you are good managers since you are only spending about half an écu.

If you get permission to establish the Charity from the record-office of the Bishop of Paris, you will have to pay something, but if it is Monsieur Guyard<sup>2</sup> who grants it, it will be nothing. You can have it stamped with the small seal which will only cost five sous.<sup>3</sup>

Well now, there are more than five women. I beg God to send you some others. As for the means, Our Lord will provide.

With regard to your difficulty, I think it would be well for you to speak to Mademoiselle du Fay, but as for the other things he is asking of you, please get advice as to what reply you should make. And do me the favor of thanking Mademoiselle du Fay for her jelly. Tell her that I am feeling better and that I beg her to ask

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**Letter 45.** - Original autograph letter, Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity.

<sup>1</sup>In 1630, with the approval of the Pastor and the help of a few ladies, Saint Louise founded and organized a Confraternity of Charity, of which she was the president, in the parish of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXIII, p. 109.) It is probably about this confraternity, still in its initial stage, that Saint Vincent is speaking in this letter. It was the second confraternity established in Paris. Nothing indicates that Saint Louise had any part in that of Saint-Sauveur which had already been in operation for several months.

<sup>2</sup>Louis Guyard, Vicar General of Paris. Formerly he had been principal of the Collège des Bons-Enfants.

<sup>3</sup>Twenty *sous* equal one *livre*.

God that I may make good use of this improved health. As for that poor young woman, what is it that she wants?

Take care of your health.

I am your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

45a. - G. PLUYETTE TO SAINT VINCENT

*Monsieur,*

*I knew that you had not written down in your ledger the amount that you gave for the board of my nephew, Mathieu Pluyette, your young scholarship holder. I would have liked very much to be able to see you about this matter but, for fear of not finding you, I have written this note to tell you that he was granted the scholarship a year ago at the beginning of Lent. An agreement was made with the cousin who gave up the place that he would receive nothing the following Easter. However, we have not been able to speak to you about that quarter, for you have as yet given my nephew the money for only three quarters: that of the feast of Saint John, the one for Saint Remi, and the other one for Christmas, as you can see from the receipts. What is left is due to the principal of Senlis, for in my day, because of the property in Le Mesnil, we used to receive nine or ten livres more at Christmas than we did at the other times.*

*So that someone does not come to see you under false pretenses, the bearer of this message is supposed to be the brother of the principal of Senlis who lives with a goldsmith. He will let me know what settlement you have made with regard to this matter.*

*I would have liked very much to see you, but Lent prevents me. I shall do so, with God's help, after Easter. Until then, I remain, Monsieur, your humble servant.*

*G. Pluyette*

*Fontenay, March 13, 1630*

45b. - G. PLUYETTE TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

*I have not yet answered M. du Coudray, who had written to me on March 22 in your name to find out when my nephew had been accepted as a scholarship holder. I told you that it was a year ago after Christmas. He has the consent of his cousin, Denis, that he would receive nothing for the quarter. I already sent you the same information, namely, what he had given for Mathieu, because he had a receipt for it. As for the Le Mesnil estate, I think that if you have noticed the income of the scholarship holders, you are aware that they receive more than twenty-six livres at the quarters. I know that in my time there was more income. I was astonished when I found out from his letter that the Le Mesnil estate did not belong to the scholarship holders because that is in the contract concerning the property left to the scholarship holders.*

*I was thinking of going to Paris for the synod and of having the pleasure of seeing you. However, since it is not being held and I am afraid I would not find you at home because of your holy occupations, I have written this note for my nephew, the goldsmith. He will see that I receive your response. While awaiting it, I remain, Monsieur, your most humble servant.*

G. Pluyette

Fontenay, April 14 [1630]<sup>1</sup>

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**Letter 45b.** - Signed letter. The original is in the Arch. Nat. (Paris), M 105 (Collège des Bons-Enfants). This edition uses the text published in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, pp. 6-7.

<sup>1</sup>In *Mission et Charité*, this letter was assigned the year 1631. However, the letter seems to be connected quite closely with nos. 39a and 45a which bear certain dates, July 3, 1629, and March 13, 1630, respectively. All three letters make mention of Mathieu Pluyette, who is receiving scholarship funds yielded to him by a cousin, Denis, mentioned by name in no. 39a, as the cousin who yielded his place in 45a, and again as Denis in the present letter, numbered 45b in this edition. Both nos. 45a and 45b refer to the length of time that Mathieu has held the scholarship as *one year after Christmas* or *one year at the beginning of Lent*. Both of these descriptions refer to the same period of the year. In 45b, dated April 14, mention is made of a letter from Saint Vincent written by M. du Coudray and dated March 22. Could not the Saint's message be a reply to no. 45a which was written on March 13? Furthermore, Pluyette states in no. 45b that he has already sent Saint Vincent the information he is requesting, that is, how long Mathieu has held his scholarship, which information is contained in no. 45a. The above reasons taken together seem to indicate that the April 14 of the letter is April 14 of the year 1630.

46. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN VILLEPREUX<sup>1</sup>

[April 1630]<sup>2</sup>

It is very difficult, Mademoiselle, to do any good without conflict. And because we must relieve other people's distress as far as it is in our power, I think that you would be performing an action agreeable to God by visiting the Pastor<sup>3</sup> and apologizing for having spoken without his knowledge to the sisters of the Charity<sup>4</sup> and the girls. Tell him that you thought you could act in Villepreux just as you did in Saint-Cloud and elsewhere, and that this will teach you your duty another time. If he is not pleased with this, leave it at that. My advice is that you do this. Our Lord will perhaps draw more glory from your submission than from all the good you could do. One beautiful diamond is worth more than a mountain of stones, and one virtuous act of acquiescence and submission is better than an abundance of good works done for others.<sup>5</sup>

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**Letter 46.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 14.

<sup>1</sup>A locality in Yvelines, southeast of Paris. Saint Vincent had often had the opportunity to go to Villepreux when he was living with the De Gondis. He gave a mission there in 1618 and, on that occasion, established his second Confraternity of Charity. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. X, end, p. 47.)

<sup>2</sup>This is the date suggested by Gobillon, *op. cit.*, p. 39, for this letter and the one that follows.

<sup>3</sup>The Pastor of Villepreux.

<sup>4</sup>Both Saint Vincent and Saint Louise often refer to the members of the Confraternities of Charity as sisters.

<sup>5</sup>The act of submission advised by Saint Vincent completely won over the Pastor of Villepreux to the views of Saint Louise, who set to work with so much zeal that she fell ill. (Cf. Gobillon, *op. cit.*, p. 39.)

47. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN VILLEPREUX

Paris, Saturday the 4th [May 1630]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Blessed be God, Mademoiselle, that I received the news of your recovery before that of your illness! I beg Him to strengthen you completely and in such a way that, one day, it may be said that the following words of Holy Scripture apply to you: *Mulierem fortem quis inveniet?*<sup>2</sup> You understand this Latin, so I shall not explain it to you.

You say that the time the children are in school is not sufficient for them to be able to draw any profit<sup>3</sup> from it and that they have two other days off. I see no difficulty in your extending the time a little and, for the reasons you advance, in your keeping them busy those two days; or in your trying to get the children who are not used to it to come to school. But I think it would be well for you to obtain the approval of good Monsieur Belin,<sup>4</sup> and to inform those who talk about it that you are acting in that way because your stay will be so short. Tell them also that it is not a school, but a devotional practice lasting a few days.

As for little Michel, be at peace. Just two or three days ago I saw him going to his lesson and he was fine.

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**Letter 47.** - Autograph letter. Original in the Musée historique de l'Orléanais in Orléans. This text has been published in the *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission* (1947/1948), pp. 499-500 and in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, pp. 2-4. The text found in Coste, which was taken from the Saint Paul manuscript, p. 13, did not include the salutation or the last few sentences given here.

<sup>1</sup>Date given by Gobillon, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup>Prov. 31:10. "Who shall find a valiant woman." (D-RB)

<sup>3</sup>Saint Louise was teaching the children catechism.

<sup>4</sup>Chaplain of the De Gondis in Villepreux. He had known Saint Vincent at the home of the General of the Galleys. When Saint Vincent was away, he used to substitute for him with the galley slaves of the faubourg Saint-Honoré. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XIV, p. 60.) In another place, Saint Vincent said (letter of December 16, 1634 [cf. no. 190]) that he had had "one of the greatest shares in the conception, gestation, birth, and development of the Mission."

I sent your letter to Mademoiselle du Fay and encouraged Mademoiselle du Fresne<sup>5</sup> to go to Villepreux, which she wants to do more than anything in the world. But her illness will most certainly not permit her that pleasure which she ardently desires. I recommend her to your prayers.

As for you, take good care of your health. Do not take too much upon yourself, which I am afraid, however, you are doing by not wanting to take the respite of those two days or keep to the schedule customary in the schools. That is why, with this apprehension, contrary to what I said to you above, I beg you to be satisfied with the usual hours. This line of action will, to my mind, be more to the liking of Monsieur Belin. If you see a serious disadvantage in this, please write to me about it again, after you have begun,<sup>6</sup> and I shall get a note from Father de Gondi for his farmer, so that he will carry out his order as quickly as possible.

Let us end here; they are hurrying me a little. I shall conclude, therefore, by asking God's help for you, strength of body, and holy tranquillity of spirit. I ask this of Him with as much pleasure as I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

My regards to your hostess.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Villepreux

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<sup>5</sup>A Lady of Charity, sister of Charles du Fresne, Sieur de Villeneuve.

<sup>6</sup>The text used by Coste ended here.



47a. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

Saturday at noon [May 1630]

*There has been no procurator at the Charity<sup>1</sup> 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 sisters 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, and also because she and the superior have at times been satisfied with giving the sick some money. They have also given some to a few needy people. They have often been careless about having meat and have placated the sick with 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 was satisfied with keeping the money box at her house and had given both keys to the treasurer. They are troubled about receiving the sick, and say that they do not need a Charity which admits only those who have nothing at all, because there are very few or none at all of that sort. A lot of people have property but it is so tied up that they would die of hunger before they could sell it and help themselves.*

48. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN VILLEPREUX

[May 1630]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

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**Letter 47a.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 31. The copyist states that Saint Louise wrote this letter in her own hand. Judging from internal evidence, it seems to precede no. 48. The letter originally appeared as no. 3297 in the First Supplement added by Coste in vol. VIII. In this edition, letters taken from the Supplements found in Coste, vols. VIII and XIII, have been placed in chronological order and have been numbered a, b, c, etc.

<sup>1</sup>The Charity in Villepreux.

**Letter 48.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter seems to be a response to no. 47a.

Blessed be God that you are feeling better and are acquiring a taste for working at the salvation of souls! But I am really afraid that you are doing too much, and so that you may see that I have good reason, please look at what Monsieur Belin tells me about it. Be careful about this, I beg of you, Mademoiselle. Our Lord wants us to serve Him with common sense, and the opposite is called indiscreet zeal.

As for the sisters of the Charity, I think it is expedient that you assemble all of them, read the rules together, and try to put everything back into practice according to those rules, which are different from the others because that was the second establishment.<sup>2</sup> But please tell them the practice in other places and try to persuade them to do likewise, especially with regard to the perpetuity of the sisters' membership,<sup>3</sup> going to confession and Communion on the day a member dies, going themselves to visit the sick as often as they can, and receiving the sacraments more often. And finally, with regard to the meat, advise the sister acting as butcher,<sup>4</sup> who is the superior, to distribute the meat justly.

My illness, which I see has distressed you, is quite minor and, had they not made me take a dose of medicine today, I would have gone out. Thank you for being concerned.

We have no water at all. I am sending to Monsieur Deure<sup>5</sup> for some. Monsieur du Fresne and his sister are leaving Friday for Villepreux. God knows whether consideration for you has not hastened the trip a little.

Little Michel is fine; Brother Robert<sup>6</sup> went to see him for me.

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<sup>2</sup>The Confraternity of Charity in Villepreux dates back to 1618; that of Châtillon-les-Dombes to 1617.

<sup>3</sup>The members of the Confraternity were not elected for life.

<sup>4</sup>"Butcher" was the title given to the member in charge of distributing the meat to the poor.

<sup>5</sup>A merchant who sold mineral and purgative water.

<sup>6</sup>No coadjutor brother of that time bore the Christian name of Robert. This probably refers to Robert de Sergis, born March 2, 1608, in Auvers, near Pontoise. He was received into the Congregation of the Mission in June 1628, was ordained a priest in April 1632, and died in December 1640 or January 1641. Saint Vincent often referred to a clerical student as *brother*. The context most often determines whether the person referred to was a clerical student or a coadjutor brother.

He told him that he is quite cheerful and contented. Be the same, Mademoiselle, I beg of you, since God wishes you to be so.

I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Tuesday at noon.

Our regards to your Marthe.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Villepreux

#### 49. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1630]<sup>1</sup>

Blessed be God that you are freed from the first attachment. We shall talk about the other one when next we meet; I mean about the one for your confessor.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, do what he advises you and everything that your fervor suggests, except the discipline, unless it be three times a week. Read the book concerning the love of God, in particular the one that deals with God's Will and indifference.<sup>3</sup> As for all those thirty-three acts to the holy humanity<sup>4</sup>

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**Letter 49.** - Original autograph letter. Coste cited this letter as the property of the Daughters of Charity of Somma Vesuviana (Italy). This house is no longer in existence and the present location of the letter is unknown.

<sup>1</sup>The nature of the advice that Saint Vincent is giving to Saint Louise leads us to believe that this letter was written before the foundation of the Daughters of Charity. The first Daughters of Charity assembled around Saint Louise on November 29, 1633.

<sup>2</sup>Saint Louise had placed herself under the direction of Saint Vincent in 1624 or 1625. She was well satisfied with it and suffered a great deal from the absences of her director. The Saint would have preferred more indifference. Le Camus, Bishop of Belley, was already writing to Louise on July 26, 1625: "Forgive me, my very dear sister, if I tell you that you are a little too attached to those who direct you and that you depend on them a little too much. M. Vincent is out of sight and here we have Mademoiselle Le Gras upset and disoriented." (Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original.)

<sup>3</sup>Saint Francis de Sales, *Le Traité de l'amour de Dieu* (Lyons: P. Rigaud, 1620).

<sup>4</sup>In memory of the thirty-three years that Our Lord spent on earth.

and the others, do not be distressed when you fail to do them. God is love and wants us to go to Him through love. Therefore, do not hold yourself bound to all those good resolutions.

I beg you to excuse me for not having been able to write to you until this evening, and to pray to God for us.

I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, Madame,<sup>5</sup> your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

I approve of the practice in honor of Mary, provided that you carry it out peacefully.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

#### 50. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1630]<sup>1</sup>

I think that it will be sufficient to put on your/our picture<sup>2</sup> the same words as on the original.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, please put those on it, Mademoiselle, and I shall preserve in my heart the ones you write to me concerning your generous resolution to honor the adorable

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<sup>1</sup>This word slipped from the Saint's pen. Saint Louise did not have a right to the title of Madame. The letter is, moreover, addressed to *Mademoiselle Le Gras*.

**Letter 50.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>2</sup>This letter predates the foundation of the Daughters of Charity.

<sup>3</sup>"Yours" because it was painted by Saint Louise; "ours" because she was giving it to Saint Vincent. The Foundress had a flair for painting. We still have some of the paintings that she did, "little water colors of delicate design, of fresh coloring, but unsophisticated pictures rather than real works of art." (Cf. Baunard, *op. cit.*, p. 8.)

<sup>5</sup>Saint Vincent is referring to the painting that Saint Louise was copying. Maynard could not understand this sentence. He presumed that Saint Louise had summed up in a painting the resolutions and sentiments contained in the act of consecration she made shortly after her husband's death. (Cf. Abbé Maynard, *Saint Vincent de Paul* [4 vols., 3rd ed., Paris: Retaux-Bray, 1886], vol. III, p. 239.)

hidden life of Our Lord as Our Lord has given you the desire of doing since your youth.<sup>4</sup> O my dear,<sup>5</sup> how that thought savors of the inspiration of God and how far removed it is from flesh and blood! Now then, that is the disposition needed by a beloved daughter of God. Cling to it, Mademoiselle, and courageously resist any feeling you get that is contrary to it. Rest assured that by this means you will be in the state God requires of you in order to have you advance to another for His greater glory, if He so sees fit; if not, you will still be sure that you are constantly doing in this God's holy Will. That is the goal towards which we tend and towards which the saints have tended. Without it, no one can be happy.

I beg your pardon for having detained your messenger so long because of the large number of distractions I had; I who wish you to be one of the most perfect images<sup>6</sup> made in the likeness of God. . . .<sup>7</sup> I have, in His love, I think, one and the same heart with you. I am your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

#### 51. - TO ANTOINE PORTAIL, IN CROISSY<sup>1</sup>

Thursday, June 27, 1630

Blessed be God, Monsieur, that you have begun preaching in the pulpit and may it please His Divine Goodness to give His blessing to what you will teach in His name! You have begun late;

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<sup>4</sup>In her youth, Saint Louise had thought of entering the Capuchin nuns. She would have done so, had not poor health proved an obstacle.

<sup>5</sup>An unusual expression coming from the Saint's pen; he probably meant to write: "O my dear daughter!"

<sup>6</sup>A reference to the painting that Saint Louise was preparing for Saint Vincent.

<sup>7</sup>These ellipsis points replace a word that we were unable to read.

**Letter 51.** - Reg. 2, p. 273.

<sup>1</sup>Croissy-sur-Seine (Yvelines).

so did Saint Charles.<sup>2</sup> I wish you a share in his spirit, and I hope God will give you some new grace on this occasion. I beg Him with all my heart that it may be the one you wrote to me about at the end of your letter, that of being an example to the Company, in which we lack holy modesty, meekness and respect in our conversations. Attention to the presence of God is the means of acquiring them. I need them more than anyone else. Please ask them of God for me.

52. - TO A LADY

July 1, 1630

Madame,

The grace of our Lord be with you forever!

Since I answered your letter yesterday, it has occurred to me that I made no response to the advice you did me the honor of requesting: whether you should receive among the sisters of the Charity, in place of the late Madame Brunel, a relative of hers. Now, I shall tell you, Madame, that since the deceased had named and introduced her before dying, and since she has the qualities requisite for doing this good work, I feel that you would do well to accept her, even if the deceased lady had not named her. But I really think you should remind the sisters to remember to appoint someone to replace them when God chooses to dispose of them, because that is the only way to perpetuate this holy confraternity.

I beg you, Madame, to insist on this and to impress it well upon

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<sup>2</sup>The biographers of Saint Charles Borromeo relate that for a long time this prelate had to struggle against excessive timidity, which caused him to tremble when he was preaching. For years he spoke from the altar, so as to be farther away from his audience; only much later did he dare go up into the pulpit.

Letter 52. - Reg. 1, f<sup>o</sup> 8 v<sup>o</sup>. The copyist notes that the original letter was written entirely in the Saint's hand.

them; to greet those good sisters of the Charity and your procurator for me; and to assure your husband that I am, and that all my life I shall be for him and for you, in the love of Our Lord, Madame, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

53. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1630]<sup>1</sup>

Relieve your mind of all that is troubling you; God will take care of it. You cannot become involved in this, without saddening (so to speak) the heart of God, because He sees that you are not honoring Him enough by holy confidence. Put your trust in Him, I beg you, and your heart's desire will be fulfilled.<sup>2</sup> Once again I repeat, cast aside all those mistrustful thoughts which you sometimes allow to invade your mind. And why would your soul not be full of confidence, since you are, by His mercy, the dear daughter of Our Lord?

54. - TO MONSIEUR DE SAINT-MARTIN<sup>1</sup>

September 1, 1630

Saint Vincent entreats M. de Saint-Martin to procure clothes for his

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**Letter 53.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. III, chap. III, sect. III, p. 23.

<sup>1</sup>Abelly states simply that this letter was addressed to a devout person. The tone and the content indicate that this devout person is none other than Saint Louise. The content also allows us to speculate about the dating of the letter.

<sup>2</sup>It would seem that, when he wrote these words, Saint Vincent had Saint Louise's vocation in mind.

**Letter 54.** - Process of beatification, deposition of Jean-Jacques de Castetja, grandson of Jean de Saint-Martin (counselor of the presidial court in Dax) and Pastor of Saint-Paul-lès-Dax, (Landes), who was in possession of the original letter in 1706.

<sup>1</sup>We believe that the person in question here is Jean de Saint-Martin, husband of Catherine

brother and nephews and to have repaired one side of their house which was in danger of falling into ruin. He goes on to write about a nephew who had recently left Paris,<sup>2</sup> and who had received ten écus before leaving the capital. But this money came from an alms, and was not destined for the missions. Then he adds:

I beg you, Monsieur, if any other relative of mine gets the idea of coming to see me, please dissuade him. Since I have no means of assisting them, they will be going to a lot of trouble for nothing.

### 55. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[September 1630]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

It is not without good reason that you are going to visit a person of such high rank as the one<sup>2</sup> who is asking for you and who perhaps needs your advice to make a decision on something very important. Go then, Mademoiselle, in the name of Our Lord and with His blessing. If the opportunity arises to do something for the children of that place,<sup>3</sup> do it with prudence; a great deal of it is

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de Comet. An uncle, the Canon de Saint-Martin, was then in Paris. He later became secretary to the Bishop of Dax (1640) and Officialis of the diocese (1644). He died in 1672. Abelly composed the first chapters of Saint Vincent's biography with the help of the recollections of Canon de Saint-Martin.

<sup>2</sup>It was this nephew who delivered Saint Vincent's letter. He had come to consult his uncle about a promise of marriage. Abelly gives some interesting details about his visit (*op. cit.*, vol. III, chap. XIII, sect. 1, p. 208; chap. XIX, p. 292); others are found in the depositions at the process of beatification by Jean-Jacques Castetja, Jean de Paul, Charles Le Blanc, Anne Varin, and Jacques d'Apremont.

**Letter 55.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written during the vacation period, before Saint Vincent went to live at Saint-Lazare and while Saint Louise was at the head of the Charity of Saint-Nicolas, consequently in 1630, for in September and October of 1631 Saint Louise was not in Paris.

<sup>2</sup>Probably Geneviève d'Attichy, wife of Scipion d'Aquaviva, Duc d'Atri.

<sup>3</sup>Probably Attichy, in the diocese of Soissons, not far from the diocese of Beauvais.



necessary in that diocese. Nevertheless, by acting discreetly, the authority of the lady of that place will be yours in that of Our Lord.

As for Communion, I think you will do well to be content with what has been your custom. With regard to your son, he will be most welcome once the ordinands have left, about ten or eleven days from now, because we have neither a bed nor a room in which to put him. So please tell him to come at that time.

Monsieur Dehorgny will be coming to speak to you about the young man they want to send here. I ask your pardon, if owing to difficulties here, I do not have the honor of seeing you before your departure.

I beg you to let me know if your Charity<sup>4</sup> is well off and if you need any money. Please believe that, thanks be to God, I am well and am your servant.

VINCENT

You must not go so near the Charities of the Beauvais diocese without paying them a visit at your convenience. Perhaps Mademoiselle d'Attichy<sup>5</sup> would be willing to visit the nearest one.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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<sup>4</sup>The Charity of Saint-Nicolas.

<sup>5</sup>Valence de Marillac, Saint Louise's aunt and wife of Octavien Doni, Sieur d'Attichy, Superintendent of Finance. She was Michel's godmother and had had eight children: Achille became a Jesuit; Louis entered the Friars Minor and became Bishop of Riez (1628), and then of Autun (1652); Antoine, the Marquis d'Attichy, was killed in battle in 1637 at the age of twenty-five; Geneviève married the Duc d'Atri; Anne became the wife of the Comte de Maure; Henriette entered Carmel; and Madeleine became an Ursuline. Deprived of their father in 1614 and of their mother in 1617, the children, still young, were cared for by Saint Louise and her husband. (Cf. *Ecrits spirituels*, L. 267.) It is unclear to which daughter of Valence Saint Vincent is referring here. It may be Geneviève, if Coste's footnote 2 is accurate.

55a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 1630]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

These lines will serve to ask you to send us news of yourself and to give you some about us and about Germaine.<sup>2</sup>

As for me, things are as usual; and with regard to Germaine, M. du Coudray tells me that he has begun to speak about her to the Pastor,<sup>3</sup> to M. Belin,<sup>4</sup> and to the schoolmaster,<sup>5</sup> and that none of them is adverse to the proposal he has made to them.<sup>6</sup> We shall see what will come of it.

I thought that we might give a mission in Saint-Cloud<sup>7</sup> for these feast days,<sup>8</sup> but we would not be able to do so without great inconvenience. That is why we are postponing it until Saint Martin's day.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, tell us, please, what is on your mind? Mine has been very much occupied this morning with you and with the thoughts Our Lord is giving you.

I am, in His love, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

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**Letter 55a.** - Autograph letter. Original at the Provincial House of the Daughters of Charity in Cracow. Published in the *Annales* (1930), p. 685; republished in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, pp. 4-5.

<sup>1</sup>Date determined by M. du Coudray's presence in Villepreux and the "proposal" concerning Germaine.

<sup>2</sup>One of the young women Saint Louise employed in the schools. She taught for a long time in Villepreux where we still find her in 1637.

<sup>3</sup>The Pastor in Villepreux.

<sup>4</sup>Chaplain of the De Gondi family in Villepreux.

<sup>5</sup>The schoolmaster in Villepreux.

<sup>6</sup>Proposal concerning a school for little girls in Villepreux of which Germaine would be in charge.

<sup>7</sup>Locality in the neighborhood of Paris.

<sup>8</sup>The feast of All Saints.

<sup>9</sup>Feast of Saint Martin of Tours, November 11.

55b. - G. PLUYETTE TO SAINT VINCENT

*Monsieur,*

*I am sending you a copy of the financial status of my nephew Mathieu, verified by a notary, as you wished. I think you are of the opinion that he should remain a little longer at Senlis for his basics; you have taken the trouble to question him about that, for which I thank you. He gives evidence of good will. I pray God that he may be able to further the holy desire of the founder and render himself capable of one day serving the people. He will do this in a more holy manner, when he has had the honor of your good company, of which I shall not deprive myself when I come to Paris, since you indicate that it will be agreeable to you. While awaiting this, I shall remain, Monsieur, your most humble servant.*

*G. Pluyette*

*Fontenay, October 2, 1630*

56. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN MONTMIRAIL

*Mademoiselle,*

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your last letter this past Saturday, just as I was leaving for Maubuisson,<sup>1</sup> and I asked Monsieur de la Salle to answer you. Now, this letter will be to assure you once again that your son is fine, as Monsieur Bourdoise<sup>2</sup> has assured me. I am also writing to

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**Letter 55b.** - Signed letter. Original in the Arch. Nat. (Paris), M 105 (Collège des Bons-Enfants). This letter has been published in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, p. 4.

**Letter 56.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Near Pontoise (Val-d'Oise).

<sup>2</sup>Adrien Bourdoise, who was born July 1, 1584, in Brou (Eure-et-Loir) and died in Paris, July 19, 1655, was one of the most zealous reformers of the clergy in the seventeenth century. He founded a community of priests, the priests of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, or Nicolaïtes, from the name of the Parisian parish in which they resided. He made one of his retreats at Saint-Lazare. This fact and his advising the Duc de Liancourt, patron of several benefices, to rely on the judgment of Saint Vincent de Paul for the choice of beneficed clergymen, show the

tell you how consoled I am that your health has improved, and that I hope you will soon be completely cured. But how, when you have to talk so much, in air so thin, and with the cold you have! Undoubtedly, if you recover your health completely, we shall really have to say that God has cured you. I hope that today or tomorrow I shall receive more detailed news about the matter. Mademoiselle du Fay has just sent her servant for news of you and I really want to assure myself that we shall have something good to tell her.

Last Saturday I told her what you wrote about her and she was quite comforted. Is your heart not comforted also, Mademoiselle, to see that it has been found worthy before God to suffer while serving Him? You certainly owe Him special thanks and should do your utmost to ask Him for the grace to make good use of it.

You want to know whether you are to speak to the assembled members of the Charity. I would indeed like that very much, they would profit from it, but I do not know whether it is opportune or advisable. Speak to Mademoiselle Champlin about it and do what Our Lord inspires you to do.

I am, in His love and in that of His holy Mother, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, October 22, 1630

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Montmirail<sup>3</sup>

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great esteem he had for the Saint. The Saint returned this esteem: "Gentlemen," he said one day to his Missionaries, "what a great thing a good priest is! What can a good priest not do! What conversion can he not obtain! Look at Monsieur Bourdoise, that excellent priest, what is he not doing and what can he not do!" (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. V, p. 298.) Much could be said about the relationship of these two men. One might profitably consult a manuscript life of M. Bourdoise, dated 1694 (Bibl. Maz., ms. 2453), pp. 2, 667, 671, and 673; the work of Abbé Schoenher, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 96, 111, 113, 118, and 129; Jean Darche, *Le saint abbé Bourdoise* (2 vols., Paris: H. Oudin, 1883-1884), vol. I, p. 526 and vol. II, pp. 25 and 284. As always, legend and history are intermingled, but this is not the place to distinguish one from the other.

<sup>3</sup>Below the address, Saint Louise herself wrote: "Villiers-le-Bel." Could she have gone to that area before or after her stay in Montmirail? It is possible.

57. - TO SAINT LOUISE

October 29, 1630

Mademoiselle,

Blessed be God that you are cured and that the thin air is doing you no harm! That being the case, please continue until you have results somewhat similar to those you have had elsewhere. But if you feel a relapse coming on, please prevent it and come back. I leave all that up to you while I go off on a little two-week trip to Beauvais.

Please recommend to the Prior<sup>1</sup> what you wrote to me concerning the election of officers.

57a. - G. PLUYETTE TO SAINT VINCENT

[Between October and December 1630]<sup>1</sup>

Monsieur,

*I had been in Paris some time ago, hoping to see you there and to speak to you about my nephew Mathieu Pluyette, holder of a scholarship from*

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Letter 57. - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 9.

<sup>1</sup>Most probably the Prior of Montmirail.

Letter 57a. - Signed letter. The original is in the Arch. Nat. (Paris), M 105 (Collège des Bons-Enfants). This edition uses the text published in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, p. 175.

<sup>1</sup>This letter from G. Pluyette to Saint Vincent seems to be closely related to nos. 39a, 45a, 45b, and 55b. All five letters mention Pluyette's nephew, Mathieu, who seems to be the same child in all the letters because four of the five, including this letter, mention his staying at the Collège de Senlis. Another fact seems to connect this letter with no. 39a: Pluyette's alluding, both in no. 39a and in this letter, to an objection concerning Mathieu's staying in Senlis. The only change within the letters appears to be the name of the cousin who is giving up his scholarship in Mathieu's favor. In no. 57a, Denis is no longer mentioned; the name is Etienne. A possible explanation is as follows: Mathieu, as stated in no. 45a (March 13, 1630), received his scholarship from Denis a year before that letter at the beginning of Lent, therefore, sometime in February or March of 1629. Mathieu also made an agreement at the beginning of that Lent that he would receive nothing at the end of the following Easter term, therefore, after Easter of 1630. It would seem that a second cousin, Etienne, likewise yielded his scholarship

*your collègue, who is continuing his basic studies at the Collège de Senlis. As I had mentioned to you, I would have liked very much for you to have taken the trouble to write a few lines giving notice that he would be remaining there for some time. I am afraid that his staying here is not considered proper. I believe that it is not against the founder's intention.*

*I have sent you a note by my man who is holding the first payment, so that he might give you a receipt for the second quarter which fell due on the feast of Saint Remi. I had given something to cousin Etienne Pluyette in the belief that he would not receive anything at Eastertime, but I think that he did receive something and that you are holding the rest. I am sending you a blank receipt for what he . . . , and when I can do so, I shall see you. Until then, I remain, Monsieur, your most humble servant.*

G. Pluyette

#### 58. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN BEAUVAIS<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

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to Mathieu upon the termination of the year given up by Denis. In no. 57a, mention is again made of the quarter following Easter, stating this time that Etienne would receive nothing, but also stating that Mathieu is still holding a scholarship. Reference to a second quarter falling due on the feast of Saint Remi (October 1) would cover the two quarters beginning with that of Easter (March to June and June to October). The scholarship yielded to Mathieu by Denis would, therefore, have covered the period from March 1629 to March 1630, while that given up by Etienne would have begun in March 1630 and would have covered, at the writing of this letter, the period from March 1630 to October 1630. It would, therefore, seem quite possible that this letter, no. 57a, was written sometime at the end of 1630 between the feast of Saint Remi and the end of the year. If it were written in 1631, another quarter, that of Christmas, would have fallen due as well and would have been mentioned in the letter. Also, since Pluyette wrote no. 55b at the beginning of October, this letter seems better placed somewhere between the end of October and the beginning of December.

**Letter 58.** - Autograph letter. The original is at Le Mans in the treasury of the church of Notre-Dame de la Couture.

<sup>1</sup>The Saint had just spent two weeks in Beauvais and had realized that a visit from Saint Louise would be useful to the Confraternities of Charity established in that town. The history of the establishment of the Charities in Beauvais is worth knowing. Before 1629, one encountered everywhere in Beauvais, in the streets, at the doors of the churches, in the churches themselves, groups of boldfaced beggars who asked for, or rather demanded, alms with threatening words. Augustin Potier, Bishop of the diocese, was worried about the situation. He had a list drawn up of all the beggars and inquired into the extent of their needs. He thought it

Blessed be God that you have arrived in good health! Oh! take great care to preserve it for the love of Our Lord and His poor members and be careful not to do too much. It is a ruse of the devil, by which he deceives good people, to induce them to do more than they are able, so that they end up not being able to do anything. The spirit of God urges one gently to do the good that can be done reasonably, so that it may be done perseveringly and for a long time. Act, therefore, in this way, Mademoiselle, and you will be acting according to the spirit of God.

Now, let us respond to all that you wrote me. It seems to me really advisable that the treasurer<sup>2</sup> be relieved of delivering the wine, and that this duty be given to someone else; because, were the inn to do it, you would have to pay an eighth. Some good

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would be helpful to create a fund which would be fed by alms and receipts from collections and to set up a central office to collect and distribute the alms. On April 16, 1629, he called the canons, municipal magistrates, and influential people of the city to a meeting in his palace and proposed to them his plan, which was adopted. To put it into action, they called upon Saint Vincent, who came immediately and set to work. He mounted the pulpit, spoke about the Confraternities of Charity, their operation, and their usefulness and soon had the joy of seeing the work established in each of the eighteen parishes. Once that was accomplished, he divided the town into districts to facilitate the distribution of the alms. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXIII, p. 108; Delettre, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 407; *Règlemens pour la Charité des pauvres malades établie à Beauvais l'onzième novembre mil six cent trente*, Beauvais, 1669.) However, obstacles were not wanting. Alphonse Feillet discovered in the Archives of the Historical Committee of France a draft of indictment drawn up by the Lieutenant of Beauvais to complain "that about two weeks ago there supposedly arrived in this town a certain priest named Vincent. In contempt of the royal authority, without speaking of it to the royal officers nor to any other city group which might have an interest in the matter, he is alleged to have assembled a large number of women whom he had persuaded to join a confraternity, to which he gives the particular name of Charity. He wished to establish it in order to assist and supply with food and other necessities the sick poor of the aforesaid city of Beauvais, and to go around each week to take up a collection of the money that they would like to give for that purpose. All of this is supposed to have been carried out by the aforesaid Vincent and that established confraternity, in which he has supposedly received three hundred women or thereabouts, who, in order to carry out their above-mentioned duties and functions, often gather together, which must not be tolerated." And the Lieutenant of the town, indignant at the boldness "of the priest named Vincent," required a report to be drawn up and sent to the King's Attorney General. Thanks to the holy man, the town was soon completely transformed.

<sup>2</sup>The Confraternities of Charity had at their head a superioress, assisted by a treasurer, another woman to take care of the storage and distribution of the material goods of the Confraternity, and a procurator.

widow from Basse-Oeuvre<sup>3</sup> or from Saint-Sauveur could easily do it. I think then that this is necessary so that the treasurer may have the time to attend to the management of the work and to the reception and discharge of the sick, for it is not at all appropriate for the nurse to do that, nor should she be paid six sous a day. Eh, *bon Dieu!* she would carry off most of the liquid assets of the Charity.

Would to God that good Madame de la Croix could follow your advice! It would be worth as much to her as a good religious order would be. As for the drugs, you have done well to deliver them, but your treasurer should not have bought them; she does not realize where that may lead. It would be well to remedy the matter through the Vicar General<sup>4</sup> and the intervention of Monsieur du Rotoir. When the Bishop of Beauvais returns, it would be well to tell him the main facts, if you see that such is agreeable to him. Sometimes he wants this. But, as for getting his blessing, it seems unnecessary to me, because he does not stand on ceremony and likes to be dealt with frankly, and yet respectfully.

As for your lodging, if you have chosen Monsieur Ricard's<sup>5</sup> house, you could not have done better; he is one of the best and most upright men I know; and his wife, whom I know only by reputation, is very devout. Indeed! I know how happy they will both be about it! I certainly hope that you are staying there.

As for M. du Rotoir's misgiving, he is right, and I think it advisable to insert into the rules that the sisters of the Basse-Oeuvre district will take care of the poor who die at Basse-Oeuvre and at Saint-Gilles. But as for the other districts, I think it is quite enough for the ladies of a parish to attend the funerals of their parish only: the sisters of the Saint-Sauveur district, of Saint-Etienne, and of Saint-Martin have too many sick and dying to be

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<sup>3</sup>The name of a parish in the town.

<sup>4</sup>Nicolas Lévesque, who was to become the first superior of the Seminary of Beauvais.

<sup>5</sup>Raoul Ricard, an attorney in the presidial court [royal courts established in the sixteenth century to relieve the pressure of appeals to the Parlements. In certain cases they also served as courts of first instance]. For thirty years he remained procurator of the Charity of Beauvais.



able to attend all of their funerals and the other parishes are suburbs, each forming a district.

With regard to the collections, you should tell them before you leave that they should spend as many days as necessary in making them.<sup>6</sup> I would really like to know the amount of each collection made. But you must remember, with regard to what I said about the funerals, that the Bishop must express his wish in these matters.

As for myself, I promise to write to Villepreux for the election of the lady to hold office and to speak to Father de Gondi about getting wood for Montmirail. In addition, I promise to let you know how your son is doing on the next trip, since I was not able to do so on this one for want of foresight.

In the meantime, be at peace. When you are honored and esteemed, unite your spirit to the mockeries, contempt, and ill treatment that the Son of God suffered. Surely, Mademoiselle, a truly humble spirit humbles itself as much amid honors as amid insults, acting like the honeybee which makes its honey equally well from the dew that falls on the wormwood as from that which falls on the rose.

I hope that you will make use of them in that way and that you will obtain forgiveness for me from the good Mother Superior of the Ursulines for leaving without receiving her instructions. Please assure the ladies holding office and Monsieur du Rotoir that I remain for them and for you, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

I am not ready to leave for our long trip; some matters of

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<sup>6</sup>The sisters of the Charities used to beg in churches and in homes. The money collected was placed in a coffer with a double lock, for which the superioress had one key and the treasurer the other.

importance are detaining us here; and Monsieur Lucas<sup>7</sup> who has been seriously ill at the mission in Berry<sup>8</sup> is coming back here.

Paris, December 7, 1630

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, at the house of Monsieur du Rotoir, in Beauvais<sup>9</sup>

### 59. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1630 or 1631]<sup>1</sup>

I have just received the enclosed from good Germaine. I beg you, Mademoiselle, to answer her for both of us. But I beg you even more humbly to excuse me for having neither come to see you nor invited you to come here. The constant work I have prevents me from doing so.

We have just set up the Charity at Saint-Benoît; but I do not know what spirit is afoot, causing each parish in Paris to want something special of its own and not to want to have any contact with the others. It is almost an insult to them to say: "in other places they do it like this." Or else they want to make a hodge-podge, taking one thing from Saint-Sauveur, another from Saint-

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<sup>7</sup>Antoine Lucas.

<sup>8</sup>Berry-au-Bac, a little village in Aisne, in the district of Laon.

<sup>9</sup>Saint Louise's visit to Beauvais bore abundant fruit. The women flocked to her talks; the men managed to hear her by hiding nearby. When she left for Paris, the people accompanied her quite a distance along the road, praising and blessing God for having sent her. Gobillon relates (*op. cit.*, p. 43) that a child who fell under the wheels of her carriage got up unharmed, thanks to her prayers.

**Letter 59.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>We read in Abelly (*op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXIII, p. 109): "The same year and the one following (1631), this confraternity (the Confraternity of Charity) was established by Monsieur Vincent, with the permission of the Archbishop of Paris and in agreement with the pastors of the parishes of Saint-Médéric (Saint-Merri), Saint-Benoît, and Saint-Sulpice."

Nicolas,<sup>2</sup> our parish, and yet something else from Saint-Eustache.<sup>3</sup>

You will be talked about at the Saint-Benoît meeting. Mademoiselle Tranchot is relating wonders about you. Do you think it would be a good idea for you to take the trouble to visit the good woman in order to stabil[ize]<sup>4</sup> her spirit so that she can strengthen the others? If you have visited her before, you could easily do so under any pretext you might find, for she will not fail to talk to you about it, nor shall I fail to be, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

I am leaving for Montreuil<sup>5</sup> tomorrow and will return the same day, I hope. Remember us in your prayers. I wish you a good evening.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

## 60. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1634]<sup>1</sup>

If Germaine of Villepreux is accustomed to going to Holy Communion, I do not see any reason why you cannot do the same. Do

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<sup>2</sup>Cf. vol. XIII, nos. 139-141, for the Rules of the Confraternity of Charity for Saint-Sauveur and Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.

<sup>3</sup>According to Abelly (*op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXIII, p. 109), it would appear that the Confraternity of Saint-Benoît preceded that of Saint-Eustache. We see here that that is not the case.

<sup>4</sup>In the original letter, this word was left incomplete at the end of a line.

<sup>5</sup>Montreuil-sous-Bois, a populous township, situated at the gates of Paris. Saint Vincent had established there, on April 11, 1627, a Confraternity of Charity whose act of foundation is still extant (cf. vol. XIII, no. 138).

**Letter 60.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 83.

<sup>1</sup>The advice given to Saint Louise seems to us better suited to the period preceding the institution of the Daughters of Charity (November 29, 1633).

so then, Mademoiselle.<sup>2</sup> If you cannot take the discipline and if you have a belt of little silver rosettes which Mademoiselle du Fay had me get some time ago, use it instead of the discipline and the hairshirt, because they heat the body too much.<sup>3</sup>

60a. - COMMANDER DE SILLERY<sup>1</sup> TO SAINT VINCENT

*Reverend and very dear Father,*

*I have no doubt that, knowing as you do the heart of your poor son, you wished, by your very kind and cordial letter, to fill it with such sweetness from your overflowing goodness that, although it is second to none in*

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<sup>2</sup>In a rule of life which appears to date from 1630 or 1631, Saint Louise binds herself to receive Communion on "Sundays and Tuesdays [here the manuscript is torn], unless there come during the week feast days which oblige her to choose other days." (*Ecrits spirituels*, A. 1.) Since elsewhere (*Ecrits spirituels*, A. 15 bis) the Foundress tells us herself that she had received from her confessor the order to receive Communion every Saturday, we are of the opinion that in the place where the manuscript is torn there was written "and Saturdays."

<sup>3</sup>The rule of life mentioned in note 2 states: "In a spirit of penance, I shall take the discipline two or three times, reciting a *Pater* in honor of Jesus Christ, an *Ave* in honor of the Blessed Virgin and the *De Profundis* for the souls in Purgatory. Every Holy Communion day, I shall wear the penitential belt in the morning, and on Fridays I shall wear it all day long." (*Ecrits spirituels*, A. 1.) Saint Vincent modified the rule and replaced the discipline by "a belt of small silver rosettes."

**Letter 60a.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXXII, 1st ed., p. 149. Coste first numbered this letter 25, but in his corrections in vol. VIII he revised the date he originally assigned. The letter has, therefore, been placed according to the revised date.

<sup>1</sup>Noël Brulart de Sillery, a member of the Order of the Knights of St. John of Malta and Commander of their establishment in Troyes, was one of Saint Vincent's most glorious conquests. After holding the highest posts at court, after being the Queen's First Squire, then her Knight of Honor, extraordinary Ambassador to Italy, Spain, and later in Rome to Popes Gregory XV and Urban VIII, he renounced public life, left the magnificent Hôtel de Sillery, sold his most sumptuous possessions, dismissed most of his servants, and went to live in a modest house near the first monastery of the Visitation. This took place towards the end of 1632. Saint Vincent, his director, had brought about this miracle. When he saw the Commander detached from all worldly possessions, he taught him how to make good use of his immense fortune. He took him to prisons and hospitals, and initiated him in the practice of all sorts of charity. Noël Brulart de Sillery put on the cassock in 1632, and received holy orders and was ordained a priest in 1634. He celebrated his first Mass on Holy Thursday, April 13, 1634, in the chapel of the Sisters of the Visitation. His priestly life was short, but replete with works of charity. He gave generously to religious congregations, especially to the Visitation,

*cordiality, you oblige it, nevertheless, to surrender its weapons to you and acknowledge you, as it does most willingly in this and in everything, as its master and superior. Indeed, a person would really have to be quite ungracious and very uncouth not to be overcome with love for a charity so lovingly exercised by such a worthy and noble father towards a son who only causes him trouble. But nothing can be done about it. I humbly and willingly accept the shame of all the insufficiencies and weaknesses that you put up with in me, after having asked your pardon with all reverence and submission.*

*I assure you, my very dear Father, that I desire in good earnest, with the grace of Our Lord, to mend my ways. Certainly, my only Father, I think that I have never felt moved in this regard to the point where I am now. Oh! if only we can and do come to the point of working efficaciously on the honest amendment of so many miseries with which Your Reverence knows I am filled and surrounded on all sides, I am sure that you will thereby receive inexpressible consolations. And even though this benefit might not come about so promptly or so notably as your piety might desire, I beseech you, my good Father, per viscera misericordiae Dei nostri in quibus visitavit nos oriens ex alto,<sup>2</sup> not to let your goodness grow weary and never to consent to abandon this poor son. You know well that he would be under too poor a guidance were he to remain under his own.*

[Around 1631]<sup>3</sup>

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the Priests of the Mission, the monastery of the Madeleine, the Jesuits, and Carmel. He tried unsuccessfully to organize a seminary in the House of the Temple in Paris. God recalled him to Himself, September 26, 1640, at the age of sixty-three. Saint Vincent assisted him in his last moments and personally celebrated his funeral service. (Cf. *Vie de l'illustre serviteur de Dieu Noël Brulart de Sillery; Histoire chronologique* [1843], vol., I, pp. 290-307; cf. also Marcel Martin Fosseyeux, "Contribution à l'Histoire du monastère de la Visitation Sainte-Marie du faubourg Saint-Antoine au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de Paris et de l'Île-de-France* [1910], pp. 184-202.)

<sup>2</sup>"Through the tenderness of the mercy of our God, in which the Orient from on high hath visited us" (D-RB). Lk. 1:78. "All this is the work of the kindness of our God: He, the Dayspring, shall visit us in His mercy" (NAB).

<sup>3</sup>It was around 1631 that Commander de Sillery began to come to see Saint Vincent (cf. no. 408), and this letter seems to be from the early days of their friendship.

61. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[March 1631]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Your son's letter seems very discreet to me; I think someone helped him. But if he did write it on his own, there is reason to hope that he will become a man of good judgment. I think it will be well for you to defer his return to coincide with yours and for you to go ahead with your trip. Give him a two weeks' delay then and tell him that you will send for him as soon as you come back.<sup>2</sup> Tell him also that you have decided to place him as a boarder with the Jesuits so that he can study.<sup>3</sup> On your return, it will be well to talk to those priests and to reserve a place for him before he comes back, so that he can be sent from the community<sup>4</sup> to the Jesuits in his cassock, without staying at your house. It will be quite expensive; but then, we must believe that one who delights in holy poverty to a sovereign degree cannot be impoverished.

As for my journey, I am not even thinking of it; the long one has been interrupted or, more precisely, postponed, and at present I do not foresee any shorter ones. So be at rest in that regard and go with the blessing of God, which I beg Our Lord to grant you. Honor the tranquillity of His soul and that of His holy Mother and be very cheerful on your trip, since you have good reason to be so in the work in which Our Lord is employing you.

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**Letter 61.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter precedes, by a day or two at the most, the departure of Saint Louise for Montreuil, where she was on March 31, 1631.

<sup>2</sup>Young Michel was unhappy at Saint-Nicolas and had written this to his mother. Saint Vincent is of the opinion that he should stay in the seminary until his mother returns from Montreuil.

<sup>3</sup>At that time the Jesuits had a famous school in Paris, the Collège de Clermont, which has become the Lycée Louis-le-Grand.

<sup>4</sup>The Seminary of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.

Please tell the Pastor<sup>5</sup> that, if he wishes you to instruct the girls for the few days that you will be in Montreuil, you will gladly do so. He has gone ahead of you to look for lodgings; in the meantime, stay at the inn. If he urges you to go somewhere else, do it, *in nomine Domini*. The inn in which you will be most comfortable is that of the widow.

Good-bye, Mademoiselle. Remember me in your prayers, who am your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

#### 62. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN MONTREUIL

I beg you to let me know how you are and how much you are counting on being in Montreuil. Remember especially to pray to God for me, because yesterday, finding myself between the opportunity of carrying out a promise I had made and an act of charity towards a person who can do us either good or harm, I set aside the act of charity in order to keep my promise and have really upset that person. This does not worry me so much as the fact that I followed my inclination in acting as I did, who am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

V. DEPAUL

Paris, the last day of March, 1631

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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<sup>5</sup>Martin Le Marinel, a priest of the diocese of Coutances, who was named Pastor of Montreuil in 1627 and died in 1637.

**Letter 62.** - Autograph letter. According to Coste, the original was at the house of the Daughters of Charity, 10 rue Alexandre-Parodi, Paris. This house is no longer in existence and the present location of the letter is unknown.

63. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN MONTREUIL

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I was quite consoled to receive news of your health and your work and I beg God to bless them both more and more. May He be your consolation when I sadden you, as I did last week, and during the interior trials with which it shall please God to afflict you.

I am satisfied with everything you told me about the Charity. Please propose to the sisters whatever you find appropriate in that regard, and draw it up, as much according to what you have written me as to what you will consider best, and I shall send you the formal rule between now and Sunday.<sup>1</sup>

As for your son, be at peace.<sup>2</sup> When you come back, we shall talk about him, and I shall do what is necessary. I shall be in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

Feast of Saint Francis of Paula [April 2, 1631]<sup>3</sup>

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Montreuil

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**Letter 63.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written on Wednesday.

<sup>2</sup>See no. 61.

<sup>3</sup>This letter belongs with nos. 62 and 64.



64. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN MONTREUIL

[April 1631]<sup>1</sup>

Blessed be God, Mademoiselle, for the blessing and good health He is giving you! I shall send you, by the Pastor<sup>2</sup> or by someone else, the rules for the Charity which I have adapted to the needs of Montreuil. Look them over and, if anything should be deleted or added, please let me know.

Taking up the collection in the village will be difficult.<sup>3</sup> God has taken care of that by the alms given in church and there is good reason to expect the same<sup>4</sup> for the future. The people are given to mockery in that area and the women might give up everything. That task<sup>5</sup> may be done by the curate, according to the rules; I have spoken to the Pastor about it. Since he cannot go there himself, he is sending you Monsieur Bécu.<sup>6</sup>

As for your removing someone, it is better to bear with all those who promise to do their duty well and then reduce the number to sixty, as the members die. Those received into the Charity will be considered members of the Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, and it will not be necessary to belong to the latter in order to belong to the former.<sup>7</sup>

Three things should be done today: propose the rules to them in the names of the Archbishop<sup>8</sup> and the Pastor; proceed to a new

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**Letter 64.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The comparison of this letter with no. 63 shows us that it is in its correct place here. We think that it was written the following Sunday, April 6.

<sup>2</sup>Martin Le Marinel.

<sup>3</sup>Because of the ridicule which might have discouraged the women who were taking up the collection.

<sup>4</sup>The same result.

<sup>5</sup>The collection.

<sup>6</sup>Jean Bécu.

<sup>7</sup>We read in the act of foundation of the Confraternity: "To avoid a multiplicity of confraternities, we have, with the consent of the members of the Confraternity of the Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, united and incorporated the said Confraternity of Charity with that of the Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, established at Montreuil." (Cf. vol. XIII, no. 138.)

<sup>8</sup>Jean-François de Gondî, first Archbishop of Paris and brother of Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondî, former General of the Galleyes, did a great deal for Saint Vincent all during his

election; and, thirdly, fix the number of volunteers. As for the rest, present it when you see them again on Sunday. You should require them to meet on that day, or at least the officers, upon whom you will please impress their duty and that of the confraternity.

Your son is fine, according to what Monsieur Le Juge<sup>9</sup> has informed me. He is the one who sent him your letter. So, be at peace in that regard. Meanwhile, I shall speak to the collège of the Jesuits on his behalf.<sup>10</sup>

We are busy with our ordination retreats;<sup>11</sup> I recommend their success to your prayers and I beg you to take care of your health.

Yesterday, Mademoiselle Sevin<sup>12</sup> was talking about going with Madame de Châteaufort<sup>13</sup> to visit you, if she can.

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episcopate (1622-1654). He gave him the directorship of the Collège des Bons-Enfants, approved the document of foundation and the first rules of the Congregation of the Mission, and allowed him to become established at Saint-Lazare. In a word, he backed him in all his good works. His name, together with those of his brother and sister-in-law, ranks high on the list of benefactors of the Congregation of the Mission.

<sup>9</sup>Thomas Le Juge was one of the chief assistants of Monsieur Bourdoise. He was a member of the community of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet as early as 1621. He became treasurer of the Seminary, January 27, 1647, and was reelected July 25, 1650. He died blind in 1653. (Cf. Schoenher, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 182; Darche, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 433 and 479.)

<sup>10</sup>See no. 61.

<sup>11</sup>Retreats for the ordinands were given at the Bons-Enfants at that time.

<sup>12</sup>Mademoiselle Sevin, née Marie Véron, was the sister of the learned Pastor of Charenton, François Véron, renowned in his day as a controversialist. She was the mother of Gertrude-Elizabeth Sevin, who had just entered the monastery of the Visitation. Her husband, Jacques Sevin, a reader in the Audit Office, had died in December 1615. It was she who introduced into all the parishes of Paris the use of the soup kettle for the distribution of assistance to the poor. Her great charity and the proximity of her house had brought her into contact with Saint Vincent, who often made use of her advice. (Cf. *Année sainte des religieuses de la Visitation Sainte-Marie* [12 vols., Annecy: Ch. Burdet, 1867-1871], vol. IV, pp. 263-264.)

<sup>13</sup>Perhaps Honorée or Honorade de Forbin, wife of the Sieur d'Aiguillenqui, Seigneur de Châteaufort.

65. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN MONTREUIL

Paris, Friday, April 11, 1631

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The short trip I made to the country, from which I returned the night before last, along with the ordinands' retreat which we opened again yesterday, prevented me from taking care of your son's business. Nevertheless, I have secured the word of Father Lallemand,<sup>1</sup> the head of the Jesuit collège, that he will accept him as a boarder and I am now going to send your letter to M. Wiart.<sup>2</sup>

I have been told that God is blessing your work, for which I thank Him with all my heart. I beg Him to bring you back replete with health and good works, whichever day next week you think suitable in order to be here for the Holy Week services.

I am sending you a letter addressed to me, but I have only just now read the note in which you ask me to forward to Mme Forest<sup>3</sup> a painting, a pot, and a package delivered here, which I have been uncertain about sending. I shall do so tomorrow, with the help of

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**Letter 65.** - Autograph letter. Dodin, in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, placed the original in the house of the Daughters of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu in Narbonne. This house is no longer in existence and the present location of the letter is unknown.

The letter was published with the layout and spelling of the original in the *Annales* (1958), pp. 625-626 and reprinted with modern spelling in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, pp. 5-6. Coste published only part of it, using the text available to him in the Saint Paul manuscript (vol. I, pp. 106-107). In his citation for the letter, Coste established that its content led him to assign Friday, April 11, 1631, as its date: it was written the week prior to Holy Week; Palm Sunday fell on April 13; therefore, April 11 would be Friday of the preceding week, not April 2 (a Wednesday), as Charavay, a dealer in autograph letters, stated in the catalogue which announced the sale of the letter.

<sup>1</sup>Jérôme Lallemand (or Lallemand) was born in Paris in 1593, entered the Company of Jesus in 1610, and died in Quebec in 1665.

<sup>2</sup>François Wiart (or Wyart), a priest of the Community of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, was born in Marles in the diocese of Laon and died in 1661 in Laon where he was trying to establish the seminary. He was treasurer or Superior of the Nicolaites from 1639 to 1647.

<sup>3</sup>A Lady of Charity whom Saint Vincent directed. At the process of beatification of Saint Vincent, twenty-seven letters which he had written to Madame Forest were submitted to the tribunal. All these letters have been lost.

God. Meanwhile, you see how unworthy I am of use and of serving as I ought. Our Lord will forgive me if He so desires.

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

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Montreuil

66. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN MONTREUIL

[April 1631]<sup>1</sup>

I received your letter of Wednesday, Mademoiselle, upon my return from the mission; I got back that same day.<sup>2</sup> I have sent you the answer<sup>3</sup> by the Pastor of Montreuil. I was telling you in my letter how I secured a place which they promised me for your son among the boarders. The headmaster himself promised it to me very readily. I have, moreover, sent to Monsieur Yart<sup>4</sup> the letter that you wrote to him, according to which I expect that your son will soon be here.

Since God has not allowed you to do anything further for the Charity, we must praise Him for this and believe that He wishes nothing else for the present. Now, since your girls have been trained, what remains to be done, and what is preventing you from returning tomorrow? They really need you here at the Charity of Saint-Sulpice. They have made some beginning but, according to what I have been told, things are going so badly that it is a real pity. Perhaps God is reserving for you the opportunity to work there.

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**Letter 66.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written at the beginning of Holy Week, Tuesday, April 15, at the latest.

<sup>2</sup>The Saint's absence was short; he had gone to find out the results of a mission given by his priests.

<sup>3</sup>No. 65.

<sup>4</sup>François Wiart or Wyart.

I am leaving today, if I can, to go six leagues from here, and I hope to come back tomorrow. In the meantime, I am in the love of Our Lord your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Montreuil

67. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Saturday, at nine o'clock [April 1631]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

I was promising myself the consolation of coming to see you, but I had to leave unexpectedly for the Bois de Vincennes.<sup>2</sup> Your dear heart will forgive me and on my return, with the help of God, we shall talk about everything. Let me tell you in advance, however, that I am delighted the boy has decided on the collège.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, as far as the cost of the room and board is concerned, it cannot be helped. We must enter by this door to get him used to it. I believe that the room and board is two hundred livres per person, and I think that there are some who pay more; but I trust that he will be satisfied with that.

As for the person you wish to replace, there is no danger in having someone according to your own inclination; but the one you mention to me will not be suitable for you, as I see it. You need someone entirely new and faithful, who respects and fears you, and thinks the same way as you do; ask God for such a one.

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**Letter 67.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter appears to have been written before the schools reopened, perhaps on the first Saturday following Easter week, i.e., April 26.

<sup>2</sup>A locality in the suburbs east of Paris.

<sup>3</sup>The Collège de Clermont.

As for the foreclosure you mention, there is no difficulty in using it as you have explained to me.

Adieu, my dear daughter, stay quite cheerful. On my return we shall discuss this whole plan and your trip in the country. Do not let your heart grumble against mine for leaving without speaking to you, because I did not know anything about this in the morning. I hope to see you again in eight to ten days. Meanwhile, I am your servant.<sup>4</sup>

68. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

[Between 1626 and 1632]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Here I am at home but wondering whether or not I should return to the country for a week or so. Because we have some matters that will keep me busy today and will deprive me of the pleasure of coming to your house to see you, I most humbly beg you to be so kind, if you are in the neighborhood around two o'clock, as to send for me at Mademoiselle Le Gras' house. I shall come to see you or shall ask you to come to Sainte-Marie in the faubourg,<sup>2</sup> in

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<sup>4</sup>The letter was very likely signed; however, due to inept cutting, the bottom of the original has disappeared.

**Letter 68.** - Reg. 1, f<sup>o</sup> 4. The copyist notes that the original letter was in the Saint's own handwriting.

<sup>1</sup>On the one hand, the name of Mademoiselle du Fay does not appear in any of the letters which are definitely from before 1626; on the other hand, this letter seems to have been written before Saint Vincent went to live at Saint-Lazare (January 8, 1632).

<sup>2</sup>The second monastery of the Visitation, established by Mother de Beaumont, August 13, 1626, in M. Le Clerc's house in the faubourg Saint-Jacques, thanks to the generosity of the Marquise de Dampierre and of Madame de Villeneuve. Saint Vincent was its Superior and Marie-Jacqueline Favre, the Superioress. (Cf. *Histoire chronologique des fondations de tout l'ordre de la Visitation Sainte-Marie*, Bibl. Maz., ms. 2439.)

Anne-Catherine de Beaumont-Carra was one of the mainstays of the Visitation. From the monastery of Annecy, where she had spent the first years of her religious life, she had

case I cannot get to the aforesaid lady's house at that time. You see, Mademoiselle, how firmly convinced I am that you are quite available and willing to accommodate yourself to the need of the moment. What a blessed state to be in!

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

69. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[May 1631]<sup>1</sup>

My slight indisposition is not my usual little fever but a sore leg caused by a kick from a horse and a small tumor that had begun a week or two before that. It is so trifling that, were it not for a little tenderness it is causing, I would not fail to go into town. Thank you for your solicitude but please do not worry about it at all because it is nothing.

With regard to the interior trial<sup>2</sup> that caused you to abstain from Holy Communion today, you made a rather poor decision. Do you not see clearly that this is a temptation? And should you in this case yield the advantage to the enemy of Holy Communion? Do you think you will become more capable of drawing near to God by withdrawing from Him than you will by approaching Him? Oh! surely, that is an illusion!

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accompanied Saint Jane Frances de Chantal to Bourges for the foundation of a new establishment. The first monastery of Paris chose her as its head in 1622 and again in 1625. During her second triennium she established the second monastery in Paris of which she was also elected and reelected Superioress. Subsequently, she directed the convent in Grenoble (1629-1635) and that of Pignerol (1644), and then founded an establishment in Toulouse (1647). She died there on January 30, 1656 (cf. vol. III, no. 949).

**Letter 69.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Saint Vincent would not have waited any longer to tell Saint Louise to write and thank M. Bourdoise.

<sup>2</sup>In his first draft, Saint Vincent had written "pain" (*douleur*).

Regarding little Michel, is that not another temptation for you to get upset because of anxiety over your obligation to take care of him? Oh! Our Lord most certainly did well not to choose you for His Mother, since you do not think you can discern the Will of God in the maternal care He demands of you for your son. Or perhaps you feel that that will prevent you from doing the Will of God in other matters. Certainly not, because the Will of God is not opposed to the Will of God. Honor, therefore, the tranquillity of the Blessed Virgin in such a case.

I am very glad that you will be sending the good child to us tomorrow and that he will be spending the morning here. I also hope that you will allow him to do some painting while he is here, and that you will honor Our Lord's peace of soul by perfect acquiescence to His holy Will in all things.

As for the community,<sup>3</sup> it would be well for you to take the trouble of thanking them warmly. But as for a gift, I do not think you can do anything much for them right now. Honor the holy poverty of Our Lord.<sup>4</sup> Besides, nothing will please them so much as the gratitude of words. And if little Michel were to write a thank-you note to M. Bourdoise, it seems to me that that would be fine.

Please remember Saint-Sulpice and me in your prayers. I am your servant.

*Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras*

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<sup>3</sup>The community of priests of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet. Little Michel had lived with them about three or four years.

<sup>4</sup>This sentence and the preceding one were scratched out. The type of ink would indicate that Saint Vincent himself crossed out the word "much," in the first sentence, and the entire second sentence.



70. - TO ANTOINE PORTAIL, IN THE CEVENNES

June 21, 1631

I am hoping for much fruit from on high through the goodness of Our Lord, if union, cordiality, and support exist between you two. In the name of God, Monsieur, let this be your principal practice. Because you are the older, the second in the Company, and the Superior, bear with everything, I say, everything, on the part of good M. Lucas.<sup>1</sup> I repeat, everything, so that, laying aside your superiority, you may adapt yourself to him in charity. That is the way Our Lord won over and directed the Apostles, and that is how you shall succeed with M. Lucas.

Therefore, humor him, never contradict him on the spur of the moment, but admonish him later cordially and humbly. Above all, let there appear no sign of division between you. You are, as it were, on a stage upon which one act of bitterness is capable of spoiling everything. I hope you will conduct yourself in this manner and that God will make use of a million acts of virtue, which you will practice in this way, as the basis and foundation of the good you are to do in that region.

71. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1632]<sup>1</sup>

I thank you for the money [you] sent me, Mademoiselle, and ask you to mortify yourself by not hearing Mass here tomorrow. I

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**Letter 70.** - Reg. 2, p. 221.

<sup>1</sup>Antoine Lucas.

**Letter 71.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter. It is not easy to grasp very well the meaning of this letter; the interpretation given by Abelly (vol. I, chap. XXIV, p. 113) seems somewhat contradictory.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written before the foundation of the Daughters of Charity and the acquisition of the Priory of Saint-Lazare.

shall say it about four o'clock and you could not get up at that hour without placing yourself in danger of a relapse.

As for the rest, I beg you, once and for all, not to give it a thought until Our Lord makes it evident that He wishes it, and at present He is giving indications to the contrary. We want a number of good things with a desire that seems to be of God, and yet it is not always from Him. God permits it that way to prepare the soul to be what we desire. Saul was looking for a she-ass and found a kingdom; Saint Louis, for the conquest of the Holy Land, and he found the conquest of himself and a heavenly crown. You are trying to become the servant of those poor young women,<sup>2</sup> and God wants you to be His own, and perhaps of more people than you would be in that way. And even if you were only His, is it not enough for God that your heart is honoring the tranquillity of Our Lord's? Then it will be fit and ready to serve Him. The kingdom of God is peace in the Holy Spirit; He will reign in you if your heart is at peace. So, be at peace, Mademoiselle, and you will honor in a sovereign way the God of peace and love.

I recommend myself to your prayers and wish you a good evening with as much tenderness of my heart as I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

## 72. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME<sup>1</sup>

July 20, 1631

So, you have finally arrived in Rome, there where the visible head of the Church militant resides, where the bodies of Saint

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<sup>2</sup>The young women whom Saint Louise was using to teach the children in the villages and to care for the sick in the Confraternities of Charity.

Letter 72. - Reg. 2, p. 1.

<sup>1</sup>We know the fruitless steps that the Saint had taken in 1628 to obtain approbation for his Institute. The only way to attain it was to have a procurator in Rome, whose job it would be to

Peter and Saint Paul lie, as well as those of so many other martyrs and holy people who, in former times, gave their blood and dedicated their whole life to Jesus Christ. O Monsieur, how fortunate you are to walk on the ground where so many great and holy individuals have trod! This consideration moved me to such an extent when I was in Rome thirty years ago<sup>2</sup> that, although I was burdened with sins, I could not help being moved, even to tears, it seems to me. I think, Monsieur, that it was this same consideration that strengthened and preserved you the night you arrived in Rome, where, after an exhausting walk of thirty miles, you were obliged to sleep on the ground and to struggle all the next day in the heat of the sun to get into the city. Oh, how many merits you gained in that way!

### 73. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

1631

You must make it understood that the poor are being damned for want of knowing the things necessary for salvation, and for lack of confession. If His Holiness were aware of this necessity, he would have no rest until he had done all he could to set things right. It is the knowledge we had of this situation that brought about the establishment of the Company, so as to remedy it in some way. In order to do this, we must live in a congregation and observe five things as essential for this purpose:

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represent him and negotiate in his name. François du Coudray was chosen and left in May 1631. On January 12, 1633, the Congregation of the Mission was officially recognized and the favors requested for it were granted.

<sup>2</sup>The trip that Saint Vincent made to Rome in 1607, after his captivity, was not his first. The Saint states several times in his conferences to the Missionaries (Conf. of October 17, 1659, 2nd point [cf. vol. XII, no. 214]) and to the Daughters of Charity (Conf. of May 30, 1647, and of September 19, 1649 [cf. vol. IX, nos. 30 and 41]), that he had seen Clement VIII, who occupied the Chair of Saint Peter from 1592 to 1605.

**Letter 73.** - Reg. 2, p. 1.

1. leave to the bishops the power of sending the Missionaries into the part of the diocese they choose;
2. the above-mentioned priests are to be subject to the pastors where they go to give the mission, for its duration;
3. they are to take nothing from those poor people, but live at their own expense;
4. they are neither to preach, nor catechize, nor hear confessions in cities where there is an archbishopric, a bishopric, or a presidial court, except in the case of ordinands and those who will make retreats in the house;
5. the Superior of the Company is to have complete control over it; and these five maxims are to be as it were the basic principles of this Congregation.

Notice that M. Duval's<sup>1</sup> advice is that nothing be changed in the plan for which I am sending you the notes. The words do not matter; but as for the substance, it must remain intact. Otherwise, anything changed or deleted would be greatly detrimental. So, stand firm and make them understand that we have had this in mind for many long years and have had experience with it.

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<sup>1</sup>André Duval, renowned Doctor of the Sorbonne, author of several learned works, friend and advisor of Saint Vincent, was born in Pontoise, January 15, 1564, and died in Paris, September 9, 1638. The Saint never made an important decision without having recourse to his learning. He asked his advice before accepting Saint-Lazare (cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXII, p. 97) and before establishing vows in the Congregation of the Mission (letter of October 4, 1647, to Antoine Portail [vol. III, no. 993]). The humble doctor got upset one day when he saw his portrait in one of the rooms at Saint-Lazare. He insisted so much that Saint Vincent had to remove the picture. (Cf. Robert Duval, *Vie d'André Duval, docteur de Sorbonne*, ms. [Robert Duval was the nephew of André Duval]; J. Calvet, "Un confesseur de Saint Vincent," in the *Petites Annales de Saint Vincent*, May 1903, p. 135.)

74. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1631]

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You are a skillful woman to have adapted the rule of the Charity<sup>2</sup> in this way; I think it is fine.

As for the Attorney General,<sup>3</sup> I do not know if there is any harm in telling him that it is the same one I establish wherever we go to give the mission. He indicated to me some time ago that he really wanted it established in Paris and instructed me to talk over means of doing so with the Pastor of Saint-Nicolas<sup>4</sup> and with the late Pastor of Saint-Sauveur;<sup>5</sup> but that did not work out well.

You did not tell me whether the Pastor of Saint-Nicolas had been to the Archbishop's residence.

I would like to know whether there is any contagion<sup>6</sup> around

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**Letter 74.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written shortly after the establishment of the Charity of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, at a time when the plague was raging in Paris. These two circumstances joined together clearly indicate the year 1631.

<sup>2</sup>Saint Louise adapted the General Rules for the Confraternity of Charity (cf. vol. XIII, nos. 124-125) to suit the particular circumstances required by the Confraternity of Saint-Nicolas (cf. vol. XIII, no. 141).

<sup>3</sup>Mathieu Molé, born in Paris in 1584, became Attorney General in 1614 and First President [chief justice] of the Parlement of Paris in 1641. Appointed Keeper of the Seals, April 3, 1651, he lost the office on the thirteenth because of political pressure resulting from the Fronde, but he was reappointed on the ninth of September. He held the position of First President of Parlement until the Queen Regent, Anne of Austria, summoned him to the Royal Court outside Paris. He died January 3, 1656. (Cf. Amable-Guillaume-Prospér Brugière, Baron de Barante, *Le Parlement et la Fronde. La vie de Mathieu Molé* [Paris: Didier, 1859].)

<sup>4</sup>The gentle and zealous Georges Froger, Doctor of the Sorbonne, had been Pastor of Saint-Nicolas since 1603. He directed the community of the Daughters of the Cross for five years and died September 3, 1656.

<sup>5</sup>Hollandre, Doctor of the Sorbonne. He was replaced May 5, 1628, by Jacques Fournier, a native of Le Mans.

<sup>6</sup>The plague of 1631 caused terrifying ravages. In the course of a door to door collection to remedy the financial straits of the hospitals, people had had the imprudence to accept sheets and linen. These gifts, divided between the Hôtel-Dieu, which had two-thirds of them, and the hospitals of poor shut-ins, spread the contagion. The Saint-Louis Hospital was filled with the plague-stricken, and that of the Santé also opened its doors to them. In October 1631, the

that parish or within it and whether your ladies<sup>7</sup> are afraid.

I am going to drink some of Monsieur Deure's water soon. God grant that I may make good use of it, if it is beneficial for me.

I almost forgot to tell you that if the Attorney General mentions to you that he will speak to me about the matter, make him understand that I do not go out. If he raises no objections on the subject, you do not have to mention me to him. I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT

74a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1631]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

Madame Laurent<sup>2</sup> is coming to see you, having considered that the most appropriate for the present. I am sending you the letters I had written for her; use them according to your prudence. I praise God that you are now better than when you left and beg Him to fill you with peace and tranquillity. I doubt that M. is capable of what you say or that the young woman is fit to follow you. I think we need to postpone the decision on that.

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Hôtel-Dieu and the hospitals of Saint-Louis and Saint-Marcel had more than twenty-four hundred patients. The Hôtel-Dieu borrowed twenty thousand livres and the Archbishop of Paris ordered his priests to solicit and collect relief. The plague raged most violently during the months of September and October. Paris had already been tried by the terrible disease in 1623 and 1625. The plague appeared again in 1636 and 1638, but did not last long and could be localized. (Cf. Michel Félibien, *op. cit.*, vol. V, pp. 69, 80, 82.)

<sup>7</sup>The Ladies of Charity of Saint-Nicolas.

**Letter 74a.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 81. Originally no. 89 in the Coste edition.

<sup>1</sup>According to Coste (vol. I, p. 136, n. 1), this letter is closely linked to nos. 79 and 81 and preceded both of them. It was written in July or August and, therefore, as Coste advised in the corrections he listed in his vol. VIII, it has been placed between nos. 74 and 75. Saint Louise probably received it in Villepreux.

<sup>2</sup>A Lady of Charity.

When will you be coming back? Will it be this week? It will be when good Madame Laurent's initiation permits. I think I shall begin the visitation of the faubourg<sup>3</sup> tomorrow. Someone wrote me about a good young woman from a place near Pontoise, who is quite suitable and very anxious to serve God by instructing children. I am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

#### 75. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[September 2, 1631]<sup>1</sup>

These lines will serve to tell you good-bye once again and to entreat you to take good care of your health. As for your son's, do not worry about it; we are looking after him.<sup>2</sup> Please write to us often.

I am writing to Father de Gondi that I think it is a good idea for you to go and begin in Le Mesnil.<sup>3</sup> According to the success of the venture, we shall see about the other place. If I do not mention any other to you, Bergier<sup>4</sup> seems the most suitable to me, then Loisy.<sup>5</sup> Monsieur Ferrat, the bailiff of the estates,<sup>6</sup> who lives in Vertus,<sup>7</sup> will introduce you everywhere. I shall write to this M. Ferrat and to the Pastor of Le Mesnil. You will get the letters Friday morning in Montmirail.

Meanwhile, banish from your mind the reason you advanced to me for taking this trip. You could not imagine how that has sad-

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<sup>1</sup>Second monastery of the Visitation located in the faubourg Saint-Jacques.

**Letter 75.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This date is marked on the blank page of the original; its accuracy may be questioned. The letter is certainly not earlier than August 29.

<sup>2</sup>It was vacation time.

<sup>3</sup>Le Mesnil-sur-Oger (Marne).

<sup>4</sup>Bergères-lès-Vertus (Marne).

<sup>5</sup>Loisy-en-Brie, where the Saint had preached a mission in 1626.

<sup>6</sup>Bailiff of Father de Gondi's estates. The bailiff rendered justice in the name of his lord.

<sup>7</sup>Principal town of a canton in Marne.

dened my heart. Oh no! I am not made that way, thank God; but God knows what he has communicated to me with regard to you, and you will understand in heaven.

I bid a good day to Mademoiselle du Fay, and to you, that you may return replete with merit and good works. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

**76. - TO THE PASTOR OF BERGERES**

Monsieur,

Because Father de Gondi has seen the great good Mademoiselle Le Gras is doing in Montmirail and Villepreux by the instruction of the girls, he wanted to procure the same benefit for those in your parish and has asked this good lady to take the trouble of going to see you for that purpose. In her kindness, she has graciously consented to do so. She is on her way, therefore, and I beg you most humbly to assure me, Monsieur, that you will be quite pleased that Our Lord is presenting you with this opportunity for the benefit of the souls He has entrusted to you. I hope, Monsieur, that you and your parishioners will be consoled by it, if God chooses to give to her work among you a blessing similar to those He has given in the other places she has been.

Now, so that your people may be aware of Father de Gondi's intention, will you please be so kind as to notify them during the sermon and encourage them to send their daughters to the above-mentioned lady's house at the times she will suggest to you? She is also quite experienced in matters concerning the Charities. I beg you, Monsieur, to have her visit the women of the confraternity



and to remember me in your prayers, who am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

Paris, September 2, 1631

77. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN MONTMIRAIL

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Here are some letters that I am sending you for the Pastors in Champagne and for Monsieur Ferrat. Seal them, if you deem it advisable to give them to them, because I think there will be no harm done, whatever Father de Gondi may write. He wrote to me of the affection with which he was awaiting you; I hope you will rest satisfied with it.

I am still of the opinion that you should begin at Le Mesnil and [go] from there to Bergier,<sup>1</sup> Loisy, Soulières,<sup>2</sup> Souderon,<sup>3</sup> and Villeseneux,<sup>4</sup> unless the Bishop,<sup>5</sup> Monsieur Ferrat, or your own prudence judges it better to act otherwise.

I am not sending you any other report since I do not think it is necessary. The spirit of Our Lord will be your rule and your tact. I commend myself to your prayers for our retreat,<sup>6</sup> which I am going to begin as soon as I finish this letter. I am, meanwhile, in

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**Letter 77.** - The original autograph letter is at the Provincial House of the Daughters of Charity in Lille.

<sup>1</sup>Bergères.

<sup>2</sup>A commune in Marne.

<sup>3</sup>Soudron (Marne).

<sup>4</sup>Another commune in the same department.

<sup>5</sup>Henri Clause de Fleury, Bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne (1624-1640).

<sup>6</sup>Saint Vincent and the members of his Community had the custom of making their annual retreat in common, usually in September.

the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, September 2, 1631

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Montmirail

78. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

September 4, 1631

A great person of rank, remarkable for his doctrine and piety, was telling me yesterday that he is of the opinion of Saint Thomas, namely, that he who is ignorant of the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation, and dies in that state, dies in a state of damnation. He maintains that this is the basis of Christian doctrine. Now, that touched me and still touches me so deeply, that I am afraid of being damned myself for not being unceasingly engaged in the instruction of the poor common people. What a motive for compassion! Who will excuse us before God for the loss of such a great number of people, who could be saved by the slight assistance we could give them? Would to God that so many good ecclesiastics who could assist them in the midst of the world might do so! Beg God, Monsieur, to grant us the grace of redoubling our zeal for the salvation of these poor souls.

79. - SAINT JANE FRANCES TO SAINT VINCENT

September 1631

*You are always admirable in your humility. I receive a very great and quite special consolation from it, but particularly from the satisfaction you say you experienced during the visitation you made to our house in the faubourg.<sup>1</sup> The Superior<sup>2</sup> also writes me that she and all her daughters derived very great pleasure from it. May God be blessed, praised, and glorified for everything and may He be pleased to give my dearest Father a great crown for the pains he takes and the acts of kindness he performs for our good Sisters! Alas, dearest Father, how good you always are to me! I know this because of those few tears you shed when you saw the overall tone of our most recent responses.*

80. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

September 12, 1631

We are leading a life in Paris almost as solitary as that of the Carthusians. Since we are neither preaching, nor catechizing, nor hearing confessions in the city, almost no one has anything to do with us nor we with them. This solitude makes us long for work in the country; and that work, for solitude.

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Letter 79. - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. VIII, 1st ed., p. 317.

<sup>1</sup>Second monastery of the Visitation in Paris, located in the faubourg Saint-Jacques.

<sup>2</sup>Marie-Jacqueline Favre who 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 Antoine Favre, President of the Council of the Genevans, then First President in the Senate of Savoy, and of Benoîte Favre. She was 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.

Letter 80. - Reg. 2, p. 34.

81. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN MONTMIRAIL

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Since Providence is detaining you in Montmirail, you must adore it and do what God is presenting to you. It does not matter if that individual has a somewhat bad reputation; perhaps she has it wrongly or, then again, she may have mended her ways. Magdalen, from the moment of her conversion, became a companion of the Virgin and a follower of Our Lord. Since I am a great sinner, I cannot reject those who have been, provided they have good will. And then, perhaps it is the Prior<sup>1</sup> who suggested that thought to Father de Gondi, to whom I shall say nothing about the affair; I think he will take care of it without saying anything. If not, please write and let me know.

As far as going to some villages around Montmirail is concerned, they are very far apart. There does not seem to be anything to do there, considering even the season.

An indisposition that I had when Madame Rousseau's son came here did not allow me to speak to him, but I offered to be of service to him and I shall. Please assure his mother of this.

As for your son, he spent a very fine day here yesterday. He is well, thank God. We shall have him purged when it is time. He was promoted to the third<sup>2</sup> year. Monsieur Dehorgny assures you that he will write to you; but the short time we had to let him know about it is the reason for your not receiving any letters at this time. Do not be anxious about him.

Madame Laurent<sup>3</sup> returned ill from Villepreux four or five days

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**Letter 81.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Jean Josse, born at Château-Thierry around 1583, Prior of Montmirail from 1620 to September 23, 1636, the day of his death. (Cf. Alexandre-Clément Boitel, *Histoire de Montmirail-en-Brie* [Montmirail: Brodard, 1862], p. 75.)

<sup>2</sup>The school year had just begun at the Collège de Clermont where Michel Le Gras, then eighteen years old, was a boarder.

<sup>3</sup>A Lady of Charity. She was probably teaching the girls in Villepreux in the place of Germaine who was accompanying Saint Louise on her round of visits.

ago. M. Belin is going to teach the girls. I told him he will be relieved of that burden in a week or so, and I have spoken to a good young woman who will not be able to get there until the time I just said.

I know nothing about the tablecloths you mentioned. I shall thank Mademoiselle du Fay for them. As for Mademoiselle Guérin, I am going to find out whether she sent any here. She came to say good-bye to me this morning because she is leaving for Chartres. She told me it was because of the disease, which is spreading here. Between your house and this one, there are two infested dwellings. M. Guérin and his eldest son, however, are staying here.

Mademoiselle du Fay is ever so slightly indisposed. M. de Vincy<sup>4</sup> came to see me yesterday and assured me that it is nothing. I can tell you the same for myself; I have not even had my little sensations<sup>5</sup> for two days.

Germaine's brother came here today. I gave him her letter and the distaff. He is off to Villepreux, where he will pass on news of her.

How is the Charity coming along? Are the women doing all right? Do they have many sick people and plenty of money? Is Mademoiselle du Fresne in Montmirail? How is she? I greet her with all my heart and her mother as well. I am not mentioning Monsieur du Fresne, for I think he is at Court, but I send my regards to Germaine. I also want to tell you that Madame de Marillac,<sup>6</sup> the Marshal's wife, is in Le Roule,<sup>7</sup> very ill with diar-

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<sup>4</sup>Antoine Hennequin, Sieur de Vincy, and brother of Mademoiselle du Fay.

<sup>5</sup>Saint Vincent is referring to the chills associated with the fever from which he often suffered.

<sup>6</sup>Catherine de Médicis, the Queen's cousin and wife of the Marshal Louis de Marillac, Louise's uncle. The Marshal had been languishing in the state prisons since the end of 1630, a victim of Richelieu's rancor. It is said that grief contributed greatly to Madame de Marillac's illness; she died the very day Vincent wrote this letter. A detailed account of her death is found in a letter from Father Menant to the Marshal (Bibl. nat. fr. 20.150, f. 203).

<sup>7</sup>At that time a hamlet situated outside Paris. It was incorporated into the capital in 1722. (Cf. Abbé Lebeuf, *Histoire de la ville et de tout le diocèse de Paris* [7 vols., Paris: Féchoz et Letouzey, 1883-1893], vol. VI, p. 515.)

rhea. Honor the patience of the Blessed Virgin in this and offer your grief to God. Would she not be most fortunate to leave this land of misery and go to enjoy the glory of Heaven?

Mademoiselle Guérin is writing to you and I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, September 13, 1631

82. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

[1631]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am much obliged to you, Mademoiselle, for sharing with me the state in which you find yourself. I thank you for this and entreat you to take things really easy and to get good medical treatment in order to recover your strength, and then to take care of it so that you can afterwards serve God. Our Lord wills it so, Mademoiselle, and I ask it of you.

*O mon Dieu!* how admirable and adorable are the ways by which He leads His own, Mademoiselle! Surely nothing is too much for Him when there is question of sanctifying a soul. He hands over body and soul to weakness in order to fortify them in contempt of earthly things and in the love of His Majesty; He wounds and He heals them; He crucifies them on His cross in order to glorify them in His glory; in brief, He gives them death in order to have them live in eternity. Let us accept these appearances of evil in order to have the real goods they produce,

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Letter 82. - Reg. 1, f<sup>o</sup> 13 v<sup>o</sup>. The copyist notes that the original was entirely in the Saint's handwriting.

<sup>1</sup>The year during which the plague raged unremittingly in Paris.

Mademoiselle, and we shall be very happy both in this world and the next.

Furthermore, I thank the Mother of the daughters for the honor she does me of remembering me, and I promise to make amends to her for her complaints. *O mon Dieu!* how I am looking forward to a good quarter of an hour hearing her tell how her daughters have been treating her and how the community has been.<sup>2</sup> But I really do not wish this to be too soon, for the number of illnesses is increasing or, at least, is not diminishing. Today I was informed that yesterday three bodies were taken from a house near Mademoiselle Le Gras and that a Father of the Oratory died at Saint-Jacques<sup>3</sup> and another at Notre-Dame-des-Vertus.<sup>4</sup>

I wish you a good evening and am your servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

### 83. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LE MESNIL

September 15, 1631<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

Yesterday, I received your letter of the twenty-third of last month, in which I read what you had to say about that clergyman.

If the Bishop of Châlons<sup>2</sup> has not sent for you and if he is nearby, I think you would do well to go to see him and tell him

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<sup>2</sup>It seems from this letter that Mademoiselle du Fay had a place to live outside of Paris in a community, probably at the convent of the Dominicans of Poissy. (Cf. no. 13.)

<sup>3</sup>Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas.

<sup>4</sup>Aubervilliers, a much visited place of pilgrimage known as Notre-Dame-des-Vertus or des Miracles. The Fathers of the Oratory had an establishment there.

**Letter 83.** - Probably an autograph letter. The original was put on sale by Charavay, March 28, 1874. It was published, no doubt from a copy made at that time, in the Pémartin edition (1882), vol. I, pp. 28-29. This letter, taken from *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, pp. 7-8, adds the first and last paragraphs of the Pémartin edition to the letter published by Coste, vol. I, pp. 126-127.

<sup>1</sup>The date given by Charavay.

<sup>2</sup>Henri Clause de Fleury, Bishop of Châlons from 1624 to 1640.

quite simply and frankly why Father de Gondi asked you to take the trouble of coming to Champagne and what you are doing. Offer to curtail whatever he wishes in your manner of acting and to discontinue everything, if he so desires. That is the spirit of God. I find no blessing at all except in that. The Bishop of Châlons is a holy man; you must look upon him as the interpreter of God's Will in the present situation. If he thinks it well for you to change something in your way of doing things, please be exact in doing it. If he thinks you should come back home, do so calmly and cheerfully, since you will be doing the Will of God.

If he is at a distance and is leaving you on your own, please continue to teach the little girls. If some women happen to be there, well and good, but at present please do not make an announcement for them to come. You can just have the sisters of the Charity<sup>3</sup> notified to see you all together. Honor in this way of acting the humility of the Son of God in His.

Since our Company is presently in Bergères,<sup>4</sup> I think it is inadvisable for you to go there. Please stay, therefore, in Le Mesnil<sup>5</sup> until the mission comes there; then you can go to Bergères and to the other places. Let me know, please, the outcome of what you do regarding the Bishop of Châlons.

Your son returned to the collège yesterday in perfect health. He had been studying six hours a day on his own here. The head priest is fond of him and intends to give him a private room, which is no small favor. He was so at home with us that, as I said good-bye to him yesterday, he was moved to tears. That shows he is good by nature; you have cause for consolation on that point. You must ask God to continue His grace to him.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

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<sup>3</sup>The Confraternity of Charity. Saint Vincent often refers to the ladies who comprised the Confraternity as sisters.

<sup>4</sup>A parish in the diocese of Châlons, now Bergères-lès-Vertus (Marne).

<sup>5</sup>A parish in the diocese of Châlons, now Le Mesnil-sur-Oger (Marne).



84. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[September 22 or 23, 1631]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I wrote to you a week ago and addressed my letters to Father de Gondi; now I am sending you three bundles of shirts and the enclosed letter. Your son is fine, thank God, and it seems to me that his mind is developing more and more. As soon as the days are a little cooler, he will come here to be purged.

Good Madame Laurent is still sick; I sent someone to visit her. Mademoiselle du Fay has been a little ill, but she is better now, thank God. Marshal de Marillac's wife has gone to receive in heaven the reward for all her good works.<sup>2</sup> Come now! This will grieve you; but then, since Our Lord has willed it this way, we must adore His Providence and strive to conform ourselves in all things to His holy Will. Certainly, I am well aware that your dear heart asks nothing better and that, although the interior is upset, it will soon be quieted. The Son of God wept over Lazarus; why should you not weep for that good lady? There is no harm in it so long as, like the Son of God, you conform yourself in this matter to His Father's Will. I am confident that you will.

But how are you? Does that thin air not bother you? And is Germaine not feeling sorry for her girls, who she knows are at the mercy of M. Belin?<sup>3</sup> When are you going to Champagne? Is that good young woman getting stronger? Is there any good to be hoped for? A word about all that, please.

I cannot tell you anything new from here except that we have the disease across from our house and that Our Lord is keeping all

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**Letter 84.** - Original autograph letter, Archives of the Mission, Paris.

<sup>1</sup>No. 83 being dated September 15, this letter, written a week later, is from September 22 or 23.

<sup>2</sup>Catherine de Médicis, Dame de Marillac, died September 13.

<sup>3</sup>See no. 81.

of us in good health, thank God, except for my little fever. I trust that you are not forgetting us in your prayers<sup>4</sup> and that you truly believe I am, in the love of Our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

I made a mistake when I told you that I was sending you some packages. I thought that three bundles of cloth I found on our table were shirts and that they were for you.

#### 85. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Jesus Christ Our Lord be with you forever!

Here at last is a letter I am sending you from your son. I hope that we shall have him purged next Monday and bled, according to the instructions that you gave us.

Mademoiselle Sevin stopped me the day before yesterday along with that good heavysset young woman in mourning who lives near your house and who wants to enter Sainte-Marie as a lay sister. She told me she was looking for a place for you to live because Monsieur Véron<sup>1</sup> needs your room. Since his son now has a position, he needs a place to receive people. I told her you would be very sorry to inconvenience him and that I was asking her to try to find a place for you and that I would tell you about it so as to find out if you have a preference for any neighborhood.<sup>2</sup> Please let me

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<sup>4</sup>After "your prayers," the Saint had written, "Good evening, Mademoiselle." He crossed out these three words to continue the sentence above.

**Letter 85.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Let us recall here that Mademoiselle Sevin, widow of Jacques Sevin, Auditor in the Chambre des Comptes, was born Marie Véron.

<sup>2</sup>Saint Louise had left Saint-Merri parish around 1619 to take up residence, along with her husband and son, in the parish of Saint-Sauveur. They lived on the rue Cours-au-Vilain or

know about that and also if you need any money, because they brought you the eighty or so livres from your annuity.

Mademoiselle Tranchot<sup>3</sup> really wants you in Villeneuve-Saint-Georges<sup>4</sup> where the Charity is going badly. I think Our Lord is reserving the success of that good work for you. Mademoiselle du Fay is well. She is still looking for a place to live, too.

Yesterday a priest from Saint-Nicolas<sup>5</sup> was taken to Saint-Louis;<sup>6</sup> he is one of the new ones. Today I sent that good young woman from Saint-Sauveur to Villepreux.<sup>7</sup>

Now then, where are you at present? What is Our Lord doing with you? Someone told me that he met Father de Gondi on the way to Champagne. I imagine that you are there, too. May it please Our Lord to bless your work there and strengthen you for it!

I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, October 12, 1631

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Courteau-Vilain which today is formed by that part of the rue Montmorency extending from the rue Beaubourg to the rue du Temple. In 1626, she went to live on the rue Saint-Victor near the Bons-Enfants (cf. Gobillon, *op. cit.*, p. 29). On October 8, 1627, a letter was addressed to her at the home of M. Tiron Saint-Priest on the rue Saint-Victor (cf. Madame de Richemont, *op. cit.*, p. 46, n. 2). In 1629, she was living in the home of M. Guérin, the comptroller, still on the rue Saint-Victor. (Cf. letter of Alexandre Regourd, Arch. of the Daughters of Charity.) At the time this letter was written she was at M. Véron's home. Since he needed the rooms she was using, she looked for another place in the same neighborhood.

<sup>3</sup>A Lady of Charity.

<sup>4</sup>In Val-de-Marne.

<sup>5</sup>From Adrien Bourdoise's community.

<sup>6</sup>A hospital founded in 1607 to care for the plague-stricken who, up to that time, had been nursed at the Hôtel-Dieu.

<sup>7</sup>Marguerite Naseau. She had left her work as schoolmistress in Villepreux to come to the aid of the Ladies of Charity at Saint-Sauveur. Saint Vincent was sending her back to Villepreux temporarily to replace M. Belin.

86. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LE MESNIL

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I praise God for your health, for your work, and for everything you wrote to me. Your son came here with a slight headache four or five days ago. We had him bled the following day and made him stay in bed. M. Quartier<sup>1</sup> told us not to purge him until his headache was cured. It was gone after three days, so that he no longer feels ill at all. That is why we had him take his little dose this morning. He is cheerful and well-behaved with us, so that he edifies us all. If this keeps up, there will be reason to praise God and to hope that you will receive some consolation from him. When he has been purged and has been well for three days, we shall permit him to go back to the collège. I repeat, when he has been well for three days and, I mean, if his headache does not return — because right now, he has none at all.

Today, I shall send the money to Mademoiselle Sevin for the dress, and to our sister Germaine the letter, which will arrive just at the right time.

If that good eighteen-year-old girl has common sense and an intelligent mind, do not scruple about letting her take care of the girls.<sup>2</sup> A good mind is better at that age than a poor one at the age of fifty.

I shall also send the blanket to your son and do everything you told me.

It is true it is much to be desired that the people who want to apply themselves to this good work have no other concern nor matter to attend to but that. I am going to Pontoise at the first opportunity. I have heard about a young woman there. I shall hire

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Letter 86. - Original autograph letter at the Provincial House of the Priests of the Mission in Naples.

<sup>1</sup>A doctor in Paris.

<sup>2</sup>As a schoolteacher in Le Mesnil.

her for Sartrouville<sup>3</sup> where Madame de Villeneuve<sup>4</sup> wishes someone.

Our little group will leave in two or three days.

Please give the Lieutenant my most humble regards and tell him that I am his servant and that I request him to reserve three beds for us at the inn. I also send greetings to Germaine; please tell her that I ordered her letter delivered to her brother.

In the meantime, I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, eve of the feast of Saint Luke,<sup>5</sup> 1631

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Le Mesnil

#### 87. - TO MONSIEUR COLLETOT

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The Confraternity of Charity, whose rules I sent to you, is not intended for the care of the plague-stricken. There are a few places where the servants of the poor, that is, those fine women who belong to the Charity, have decided, not to go and visit the contagious, but rather to take them food or carry it to some place for them, at a certain distance from where those poor people have

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<sup>3</sup>Commune in Yvelines.

<sup>4</sup>Widow of Claude-Marcel de Villeneuve, Master of Requests, sister of Mother Hélène-Angélique l'Huillier of the Visitation, friend of Mademoiselle Le Gras and of Madame de Lamoignon and Foundress of the Daughters of the Cross, which she instituted in 1641; she died January 15, 1650, at the age of fifty-three. (Cf. R. P. de Salinis, *Madame de Villeneuve* [Paris: Beauchesne, 1918].)

<sup>5</sup>October 17.

**Letter 87.** - Autograph letter. The original is in the British Museum, foreign private letters, Egleton 27, f° 166.

taken shelter, so as not to be in danger of catching the disease. This is to be understood of places where nothing is organized for the plague-stricken. However, the confraternity in question is not for the plague-stricken specifically, only indirectly.

If someone in your parish is afflicted with the disease, then the Charity should appoint some good poor woman or man to deliver the supplies. The servants of the poor do not have to go there, each one on her day, as they do with the other sick people.

This, Monsieur, is all that I can tell you in answer to your letter, except that I am asking God to bless the holy work you are undertaking and to sanctify your soul. May He Himself be your reward in this world and in the next and make me worthy of being, in His love and in that of His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Monsieur Colletot, Prior of La Forêt-le-Roi<sup>1</sup>

**88. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LE MESNIL**

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I showed your letter to Father de Gondi, those of the Bishop of Châlons to you, and yours to him.<sup>1</sup> Now, all things weighed and considered, and to his great regret, he is of the opinion that you should obey the Bishop of Châlons. He thinks that God wills it thus, since it is by order of the person who is the interpreter of His Will in the place where you are. Now, such being the Will of God,

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<sup>1</sup>There is some doubt about the reading of this word.

**Letter 88.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Evidently the Saint means: I have shown Father de Gondi your letter to me, the ones the Bishop of Châlons (Henri Clause de Fleury) wrote to you, and your answer to this prelate.

please come back home. You will not fail to receive the reward you would have had if you had instructed all the girls in that area. Oh! how happy you are because you have this relationship to the Son of God, having been obliged, like Him, to withdraw from a province where, thank God, you were doing no harm! Father de Gondi will thank you here for the trouble you have taken and will let you know how he feels about it. I beg you not to think that this is being done through your fault. No, it is not that, but a simple disposition of God for His greater glory and for the greater good of your soul. What is most sublime in the life of Saint Louis is the tranquillity with which he returned from the Holy Land without having succeeded according to his plan. Perhaps you will never have an opportunity in which you can give more to God than in this one. Make use of it then according to the measure of the grace Our Lord has always shown in you.

Mademoiselle Sevin is writing to ask you to find another place to live. You can go with Mademoiselle du Fay and live there until you get a place that is suitable for you. Good Mademoiselle Sevin will be working on that.<sup>2</sup>

As for the fifty écus, keep them. Let us know here what you do with them. Your son has returned to the collège; he is very well and doing well likewise.

My most humble regards to the Pastor, to M. Ferrat, and to Germaine. And I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

Paris, eve of the feast of All Saints [1631]<sup>3</sup>

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Le Mesnil

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<sup>2</sup>Did she have the time to work at it? She died at the end of December and was interred on the thirty-first in front of the pulpit in the church of Saint-Nicolas. (Bibl. Nat., ms., fr. 32.590.)

<sup>3</sup>October 31. The contents of the letter dictate the year.

89. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 74a.)

90. - TO JEAN DE LA SALLE, IN LE MESNIL

November 11, 1631

There is no objection at all to accepting alms from Father de Gondi. If you have already refused them, offer your apologies to M. Ferrat. Father de Gondi is our founder. We have no right to refuse what he gives us for the love of God any more than we would refuse a gift from someone who was not from the place where we were giving a mission. Saint Paul acted in that way; he never accepted anything from the place where he was working, but he took from the other churches in order to work in the new ones when the toil of his own hands was not sufficient, or when preaching and conversions prevented him from working with his hands to earn his living. *Spolians Ecclesias Macedoniae, ut non essem vobis oneri*, he said to the Corinthians,<sup>1</sup> although he stated that his glory in preaching the Gospel was in accepting nothing.

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**Letter 90.** - Reg. 2, p. 196. The copyist notes that the original was in the Saint's handwriting.

<sup>1</sup>*Robbing the churches of Macedonia, so as not to be a burden to you.* 2 Cor. 11:8-9. "I robbed other churches, I accepted support from them in order to minister to you. When I was with you and in want I was a burden to none of you, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my needs. In every way possible I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and I shall continue to do so" (NAB). Saint Vincent did not quote Saint Paul verbatim.



91. - TO GUILLAUME DE LESTOCQ, PASTOR OF SAINT-LAURENT<sup>1</sup>

[1631]<sup>2</sup>

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Yesterday I went to the Attorney General's<sup>3</sup> home and found four or five carriages in front of his door. Since it was very late and I would have had to wait a long time, I thought it better to put off my visit until today after dinner. Therefore, I shall see him presently, according to the Prior's<sup>4</sup> order. I shall not have the honor of going to see the latter this morning, both because it seems to me that he wishes us to have the Attorney General's word before settling the matter,<sup>5</sup> and so that you, Monsieur, may do us the

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**Letter 91.** - Collection for the process of beatification.

<sup>1</sup>He was at the head of Saint-Laurent parish, at that time near Paris, from 1628 to May 9, 1661, the day of his death. He was the principal instrument in achieving the union of the Congregation of the Mission and the Priory of Saint-Lazare. He wrote a detailed account of this union which Abelly incorporated into his work (*op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXII, pp. 95 ff.).

<sup>2</sup>Since Saint Vincent took possession of Saint-Lazare on January 8, 1632, it seems appropriate to assign 1631 as the probable date for this letter.

<sup>3</sup>Mathieu Molé.

<sup>4</sup>Adrien Le Bon, Canon Regular of Saint Augustine, was born in Neufchâtel (Seine-Maritime) and died at Saint-Lazare, April 9, 1651, in his seventy-fourth year.

<sup>5</sup>Adrien Le Bon was led to resign the Priory of Saint-Lazare because of the misunderstanding that existed between him and his religious. The talk of the successful results that Saint Vincent and his Missionaries were achieving on their apostolic journeys, as well as the advice of the Pastor of the parish, caused him to look in their direction. M. de Lestocq personally accompanied him to the Bons-Enfants. The generous offer of the good Prior alarmed Saint Vincent's humility. He refused. Adrien Le Bon persisted in his project. Six months later, he returned to the collège and again renewed his offer in vain. For another six months, he renewed his requests, which became more insistent from day to day. Finally, it was agreed that the decision would be left up to André Duval. He was of the same opinion as the Prior. The major obstacle was overcome but an agreement still had to be reached concerning the clauses of the contract. This was not easy. Saint Vincent's letter to M. de Lestocq acquaints us with some of the points argued by both parties. The contract was signed January 7, 1632 (cf. vol. XIII, no. 77). The following day Saint Vincent and his men came to live at Saint-Lazare (cf. vol. XIII, no. 78). This account, confirmed by the statements of the Saint (cf. letter of January 30, 1656, to Nicolas Etienne, vol. V, no. 2001), deserves far more credence than that contained in Claude de Moulinet, *Histoire des chanoines réguliers de l'Ordre de S. Augustin de la Congrégation de France depuis l'origine jusqu'en 1670* (4 vols., Bibl. Sainte-Geneviève, ms. 611-614, n. d.), vol. III, p. 57. The author of this work asserts that the gift of the

charity of telling him a few difficulties to be found in the proposals which he did me the honor of offering me yesterday. The above-mentioned Prior did me the honor of telling me yesterday evening that he had consulted his religious<sup>6</sup> about our manner of acting in choir, the housing and furniture, and the board that those who would wish to live with us would pay. Now, with regard to the last difficulty, which is that each religious would pay only two hundred livres board, I accept that most willingly, although I have calculated the expense exactly from what it has cost us at present and it will cost us more, and although even the students are paying ninety écus.<sup>7</sup>

As for the housing, I am afraid that some difficulty might arise in the course of time if we were together in the dormitory, because we observe silence from the evening after prayer until the next day after dinner, when we have an hour of recreation; and from recreation until the evening after supper, at which time we have another hour of recreation. When that is over, we again enter into silence, speaking only when necessary and in a low voice. Now, whoever takes that from a community introduces into it an inexpressible disorder and confusion. This has led a holy person to say that he will guarantee, when he sees a community observing silence exactly, that it also observes everything else pertaining to regularity; on the contrary, when he sees another in which silence is not

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Priory of Saint-Lazare to Saint Vincent was the result of the latter's maneuvers. To remain in possession of the estate, Vincent de Paul had to endure more than one lawsuit. His right was always recognized. The union was approved January 8 by the Archbishop of Paris (cf. vol. XIII, no. 79); a few days later by the King (cf. vol. XIII, no. 80); on March 24, by the Provost of Tradesmen and the Municipal Magistrates of the city of Paris; on September 7, by the Parlement; and on March 15, 1635, by Pope Urban VIII. Saint-Lazare was outside the city limits of Paris. The buildings and the enclosed area covered a vast quadrangle which today is encompassed by the rue du Paradis, the rue du faubourg Saint-Denis, the boulevard de la Chapelle, and the rue du faubourg Poissonnière. (Cf. Jean Parrang, "Saint-Lazare" in the *Petites Annales de S. Vincent de Paul*, 1903, pp. 13-30.)

<sup>6</sup>The religious were nine in number: Adrien Le Bon, Prior; Nicolas Maheut, Sub-prior; Claude Cousin, Receiver; Claude Gothereau, Dispenser; Richard Levasseur, Sacristan; Adrien Descourtils; Jacques Lescellier; François Cacquet; and Claude de Morennes. (Cf. Arch. Nat. M 212; cf. also vol. XIII, no. 77.)

<sup>7</sup>One *écu* equals three *livres*.

observed, that it is impossible that anything else pertaining to regularity be observed.

Now, there is good reason to fear, Monsieur, that those gentlemen will not wish to obligate themselves to such silence and that, by not doing so ourselves, we may destroy so necessary a practice which we have tried to observe until now to the best of our ability. Therefore, I think it would be advisable to return to the proposals that the religious made to me in the presence of the aforesaid Prior, that is, that they take a few private rooms, with fireplaces, which we shall have arranged for their use. As for furniture, they can take their own from their rooms, and we shall provide them with linen and tableware or give each one fifty livres to buy some. Far from considering this simony, on the contrary, it seems to me more than reasonable to act in this way since those gentlemen will be leaving us their community furniture. By this means, therefore, they will leave us the dormitory, in which we shall be able to observe our silence without difficulty.

With regard to the choir, the Prior suggests an order of precedence and that we wear the domino<sup>8</sup> and also the almuce.<sup>9</sup> Now, allow me to tell you, Monsieur, that although I make no objection at all to the Company's having to leave the first places to those gentlemen when they wish to come to choir, nonetheless, I do not think it advisable to burden us with the almuce or with the domino. To avoid confusion and the suspicion that Parlement<sup>10</sup> might have of our beginning to become canons, and consequently that we are tacitly renouncing our plan to work unceasingly for the poor people of rural areas, it is, I repeat, advisable that we not be burdened with the almuce or with the domino and that the service be left to us to be performed according to the obligation of our

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<sup>8</sup>A black hooded cape or cloak.

<sup>9</sup>The fur which canons usually wear on their arm.

<sup>10</sup>*Parlement* refers to the French judicial system. At the time of Saint Vincent, France had eight *Parlements*, each with its own legal jurisdiction, chief of which was the *Parlement* of Paris. They registered or gave sanction to the King's edicts, ordinances, and declarations, and supervised the implementation thereof.

conscience, as is agreed in the contract. Now, the manner in which I intend to do that, and which the Prior formerly thought proper, is to recite the office *media voce*, without singing, except for High Mass and Vespers on Sundays and feast days.

Those, Monsieur, are the difficulties I find in the proposals that the Prior did me the honor of offering me yesterday evening and which I most humbly beg you to mention to him this morning and to let me know how he feels. I am perfectly confident that, since he is thinking primarily of the glory of God and the salvation of the people in these matters, and, seeing the inconveniences that could arise if things were carried out as he suggested, he will accept the very humble protest I offer him. I would prefer that we remain forever in our poverty rather than change the direction of God's plan for us. I am ashamed to bother you so much; please forgive me.

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saturday morning

92. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1631]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I shall send for the painter tomorrow and shall do as you told me. By the same means I shall let the nurses of the sick poor of

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Letter 92. - Original autograph letter. Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity.

<sup>1</sup>The letter was written no later than 1631, as there is mention made of Mademoiselle Sevin, who died in December of that year; on the other hand, several indications prevent us from going back any further.

Saint-Sauveur know what Mademoiselle Tranchot has told you concerning your son. We shall see him whenever you wish, but I do not think that you should have him take Orders so soon. He is not old enough for Holy Orders;<sup>2</sup> and as for the four Minor Orders, they are neither useful nor necessary at present. He would have to set aside his studies to prepare for them. That would also be a great loss for him.

How sorry I am about your suffering! But, such being the order of Providence, what can you do? And truly, what real harm do you have to fear from this? So, there is a man who says you promised to marry him,<sup>3</sup> and it is not true. You are being falsely accused. You are suffering interiorly, unjustly, and without cause. Are you afraid that people are talking about you? Maybe they are, but rest assured that that is one of the greatest means of conformity with the Son of God that you could have on earth. You will thereby acquire victories over yourself that you could never have had. Oh! how much vain complacency is being destroyed in this way and how many acts of humility are being brought forth by this means! Courage! Nothing but good can come to you from this, both in this world and the next. So, strengthen yourself within against the feelings of nature, and the day will come when you will bless the hour in which Our Lord tried you in this manner. I am, in His love, your most humble servant.

V. D.

I beg you to excuse me for not [having sent]<sup>4</sup> this reply to you today; the trouble I am having with our negotiations kept me from doing so.<sup>5</sup> Please find out from Mademoiselle Sevin what she

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<sup>2</sup>Michel Le Gras was only about eighteen years old.

<sup>3</sup>Saint Louise was forty years old at the time.

<sup>4</sup>These words were left out in the original letter.

<sup>5</sup>Might he not be referring here to the negotiations in progress with regard to uniting the Priory of Saint-Lazare to the Congregation of the Mission?

knows about it and let me know. I have just returned from town, where I have been since this morning.

Tuesday evening

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

93. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1634]<sup>1</sup>

Here is that good young woman who has come to be your servant, if you so desire. She is healthy, thank God, except for a slight fever which recurs regularly. I think she will look after you very well. If you like, you can send her back home for a week or so.

As for the water,<sup>2</sup> drink it freely; it has never harmed anyone and there are many who are cured by it. Madame de Portnal is beginning to feel well from it. I shall tell Monsieur Deure to send you some, or else, you can ask Mademoiselle to tell him.

I shall be leaving tomorrow in haste. If I can, I shall see you. I hope to be only ten to twelve days. Assist us with your prayers and be comforted in the object of your love, who is our suffering Lord. I shall be in the love of our Lord and in that of His holy Mother, your servant.

V. D.

I repeat that you are not to stop drinking that water.

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**Letter 93.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter certainly preceded the foundation of the Daughters of Charity (November 1633), because after that date Saint Louise had no maid in her service.

<sup>2</sup>A purgative or mineral water of which M. Deure was a merchant.

94. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

December 23, 1631

. . . As for the reports you would like to have presented by others who might be less interested in the matter than we, I also would like that, although it seems to me to be rather naïve, but what recourse do we have? One who says things quite plainly as they are and puts his faith in God is pleasing to God, as is, I think, this line of action. Truth and humility go well together.<sup>1</sup>

94a. - TO POPE URBAN VIII<sup>1</sup>

[January 1632]<sup>2</sup>

Some years ago, having reflected in his piety and charity that in many places of France the country people in particular are de-

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**Letter 94.** - Reg. 2, p. 2.

<sup>1</sup>François du Coudray was in Rome negotiating the approbation of the Congregation of the Mission.

**Letter 94a.** - The original is in the Archives of the Congregation of Religious in the Vatican. A Latin text was published in the *Annales* (1926), pp. 140-144, and an Italian text in the *Annales* (1941), pp. 27-30. Both volumes contain historical explanations which form the basis for the following footnotes.

<sup>1</sup>Giovanni Mazzini, of the Vatican Library, discovered this petition in the Archives of the Congregation of Religious on July 17, 1925. Unlike the petition of 1628 (no. 28), which was submitted to the Congregation of the Propaganda, this petition was presented to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. As was customary, Saint Vincent addressed this request for approbation of his Congregation to "His Holiness."

<sup>2</sup>In May 1631, Saint Vincent dispatched François du Coudray to Rome in order to have a personal representative working for the apostolic approbation of his Congregation. He gave Du Coudray specific instructions (no. 73) and entrusted to him his latest petition (no. 94a).

In February 1632, this petition was presented to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars with the following résumé: *Established in Paris with the consent and approbation of the Ordinary, of His Most Christian Majesty, and of Parlement, this Congregation of secular priests is to visit, instruct, and minister to the people of the countryside in matters of faith: it requests the confirmation of the Institute.* The Congregation examined it on February 13, 1632; Cardinal Guido Bentivoglio submitted his report on April 30, 1632. He advised that the Nuncio to France and the Archbishop of Paris be asked again for their opinion concerning this desired apostolic confirmation. Saint Vincent alluded to this request in his letter to Du Coudray, July 12, 1632 (no. 112). Subsequently, Pope Urban VIII approved the Congregation of the

prived of spiritual consolation, and that many of them are ignorant of the principal articles of faith about the Most Holy Trinity and the sacred mystery of the Incarnation, without which there is no salvation, or do not believe in them as they should, that they do not dare to reveal and confess their sins to their pastors, either because of shame or because they are too familiar with them, and that many live in error thinking they have confessed correctly although they are concealing even more serious sins, the nobleman Emmanuel de Gondi, Comte de Joigny, gave the sum of forty-five thousand lire of Turin for the foundation of a congregation of secular priests called the Missionaries who were to instruct the above-mentioned country people in the rudiments of Christian doctrine, hear their confessions, administer to them the sacraments of the Church, preach to them, and teach them all the other things concerning their salvation, wherever and whenever they should be sent by the local Ordinaries to perform these spiritual functions. Some secular priests, living together in a house located in the city of Paris and occupying themselves with spiritual activities of this sort to the very great edification of the people, have already happily begun such an institute under the direction of Vincent de Paul, a priest of the diocese of Aix in the province of Auch, founder of the said Congregation and Superior of the aforesaid house. They observe the following:

— 1. First, the principal purpose of the said Congregation is to venerate the Most Holy Trinity and the sacred mystery of the Incarnation.

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Mission by the Bull *Salvatoris Nostris*. If we compare this petition to the Bull, we can see that the Bull reproduces the exposition almost word for word.

The above information seems to indicate January 1632 as a probable date for this petition and calls for an alteration of the date previously assigned to *Salvatoris Nostris*. January 12, 1632 has always been the date assigned to this Bull; it appears that this is an error. The Bull was issued in "the year of the Incarnation of Our Lord 1632, the eve of the ides of January, the tenth year of our Pontificate." In bulls, the year of the Incarnation begins, not on January 1, but on March 25. Therefore, the eve of the ides of January in the year of the Incarnation 1632 is actually January 12 of the civil year 1633 (*Annales* [1926]). Moreover, Urban VIII was elected Pope in 1623 (August 5, 1623), so the "tenth year of our Pontificate" would be 1633. The date of *Salvatoris Nostris* is, therefore, January 12, 1633.



2. The priests of the said Congregation are sent by the local Ordinaries — to whom the Congregation submits itself in this matter only, and to whom it wishes and intends, now and in the future, to show a perfect obedience — to the cities and towns and other places of the Kingdom of France which are subject to the rule of the Most Christian King, except those which have the title of Parlement or Bailiffship, where there is no lack of priests, either secular or regular, or other ecclesiastical ministers. They are sent to them to teach the Commandments of God to those who do not know them and to instruct them in the rudiments of Christian doctrine, to hear their confessions, to administer to them the Sacraments of the Church, and to carry on among them the office of teaching catechism and preaching. However, they first obtain the permission of the pastors, without which they never go in to perform these functions, nor do they wish to be able to do so.

3. In places where they have preached, they establish, by authority of the Ordinaries, Confraternities of Charity, as they are called, if these are needed in order to help the sick poor, and they themselves contribute something to this holy work out of their own goods.

4. With the greatest possible charity they try to settle and calm lawsuits and quarrels in which the country people in particular are sometimes involved all through their life.

5. They welcome into their houses parish priests who wish to make spiritual retreats and receive instruction concerning the administration of their parishes. They make an effort to assemble these parish priests once a month to deal with cases of conscience and the administration of the Sacraments, whenever this can be done conveniently for the local vicinity and is without detriment to their churches.

6. At ordination times they welcome into their houses those who wish to receive Orders so as to teach them how they are to exercise these Orders and receive them worthily.

7. The aforesaid Congregation does all these things without

charge and without any expectation of compensation, and promises to do the same in time to come.

As time went on, lifting up their minds more and more to heavenly things, the aforesaid priests decided upon the following ordinances:

1. The Congregation shall consist of laymen,<sup>3</sup> clerics, and priests who shall have all things in common.

2. The laymen shall be content with the service of Martha and take care of domestic matters.

3. Clerics shall have to be seventeen or eighteen years old before they can be admitted into the Congregation, and shall become members of the Congregation after a year of probation.

4. The above-mentioned Vincent de Paul shall remain Superior of the said house of Paris, and after the other houses of the Congregation have been founded, he shall be elected for his lifetime as Superior General of the Congregation.

5. After the death of the said Vincent de Paul, the Superior General of the Congregation at any given time shall be elected every three years, and may be maintained in office for no more than one other term of three years.<sup>4</sup>

6. The Superior General shall appoint Superiors and other lesser ministers and remove them at his discretion. He shall visit each house of the Congregation, the property and members, correct, and have other authority and superiority which the Superiors General of similar or other Congregations have, may have, or will have in the future.

Moreover, since experience has proven that this pious institute has brought forth abundant fruits, and since it may be hoped that

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<sup>3</sup>Coadjutor brothers.

<sup>4</sup>In the rules issued by Saint Vincent in 1655, the Superior General was to govern for life. This rule perdured until the General Assembly of 1968, in which the Constitutions and Statutes were revised to conform with the decrees of Vatican Council II. According to no. 105, § 3, the Superior General is elected for a term of six years and can be reelected for one additional term of six years.

such happy beginnings will have even happier progress, and since those things which are strengthened by the protection of the Apostolic See are more lasting, Vincent, the Superior of the said house and the other priests of the Congregation humbly beseech the said Congregation<sup>5</sup> to show itself especially gracious to the aforesaid Congregation, and through it to each of its members, and to approve and confirm by apostolic authority everything that has been done so far, strengthen it by apostolic recognition, and allow the Superior General of the aforesaid Congregation and his successors, for the greater progress of this Congregation, to enact any other statutes, beyond the aforesaid ordinances, provided they are licit and proper and in no way contrary to the sacred canons and decrees of the Council of Trent. May they also be allowed, according to the nature of circumstances and times, and as often as it shall seem appropriate, to change, alter, modify, limit, and correct them, and have the power to issue new norms freely and unrestrictedly, provided the aforesaid statutes, their changes, alterations, modifications, limitations, corrections, and the new ones to be issued are first approved by the Ordinary. May the Congregation itself and each one of the present and future members enjoy all and each one of the privileges, immunities, freedoms, exemptions, faculties, favors and graces, indults, indulgences and other concessions which other Congregations use, have, and enjoy, or may or will be able to use, have, and enjoy in the future. May they use, have, and enjoy them in the same way and to the same extent and without any difference, as if they had been specifically and expressly granted to the said Congregation, its Superiors, and other members. May you be pleased to grant and permit this and to declare null and void [everything to the contrary].

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<sup>5</sup>The Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

95. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

Blessed be God that His goodness is strengthening you more and more in His love and in the accomplishment of His holy Will. It will indeed be fitting for you to make some sort of pilgrimage for what you told me; but for the love of God, Mademoiselle, do not get sick on the way. We must accept illness as we would a divine state. It is true that Our Lord helps you in a special way. It seems to me that you are killing yourself from the little care you take of yourself. Be quite cheerful, I beg you. Oh, what great reason people of good will have to be cheerful!

96. - TO SAINT LOUISE

To be on the safe side, you should have a doctor's certificate stating that it would be advisable for you and your son to eat meat, and send it to the secretary of the Archbishop of Paris whose name is M. Baudouin. He will get you the permission without any difficulty. Once that is done, do not make any objection to eating meat. On the contrary, as far as in me lies, I order you to do so and to put aside the misgivings that you are allowing to enter your heart. Be fully confident that you are the dear daughter of Our Lord, through His mercy.

I am ordering you, moreover, to procure for yourself the holy joy of your heart by all the relaxation you can possibly take, and to forgive me for not having had the happiness of seeing you because of the great number of matters that are keeping me busy. Rest

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Letter 95. - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 66.

Letter 96. - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

assured, Mademoiselle, that I shall have this happiness as soon as I can and that I am your servant.

V. D.

I beg you to see about that permission tomorrow morning, so that you can start eating meat tomorrow, because fish does not agree with you at all.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

97. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1632]<sup>1</sup>

I beg you, Mademoiselle, do what Monsieur Bouvard<sup>2</sup> tells you, confident that God will bless his remedies. I am not telling you to take them all; I hope there will be no need for that. Come now, you must do this. As for the rest, it will take care of itself in its own time. Above all, remain in good spirits. I shall see Monsieur Bouvard and talk to him about you and about the drug.

As for the other matter we talked about yesterday, do not be concerned about it. He who has time at His command will take care of that affair in the time He has foreseen as appropriate from all eternity.

Get better then, and soon, I beg you, and I shall be, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble and obedient servant.

V. D.

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**Letter 97.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The letter appears to have been written before the institution of the Daughters of Charity.

<sup>2</sup>King Louis XIII's principal doctor, who died October 22, 1658, at the age of eighty-six. Several of his daughters entered the Visitation, including Marie-Augustine, who was Superior of the monastery of the faubourg Saint-Jacques, the second Monastery of the Visitation in Paris. She died there on November 15, 1659, at the age of forty-eight, having spent twenty-eight years in the Visitation community.

98. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1632]<sup>1</sup>

Did I not tell you yesterday, Mademoiselle, that you had to consent to what you were asking, because in any case your heart would have no rest until it was done. Do it then, at an appropriate time, calmly and without haste. Because of you I shall have one done again myself one of these mornings. However, visit Monsieur Bouvard afterwards. But get well soon in order to serve God. Oh, how my heart longs for that to be so, and quickly! Come now, do what has to be done on your part. In the meantime, keep your spirits up and do what you have to do in a cheerful way. I shall be, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

V. D.

I would like to know if M. Meynard is an attorney at the Châtelet<sup>2</sup> or at the Court.

99. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

[Between 1626 and 1635]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

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**Letter 98.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The mention of M. Bouvard who was Saint Louise's doctor, for a very short time it seems, leads us to place this letter near no. 97.

<sup>2</sup>Name given to two fortresses in Paris. The Grand Châtelet was the headquarters of the criminal jurisdiction; the Petit Châtelet served as a prison.

**Letter 99.** - Reg. 1, f<sup>o</sup> 69. The copyist notes that the handwriting of the original was that of Saint Vincent.

<sup>1</sup>The name of Mademoiselle du Fay does not appear in any of the letters definitely written before 1626 or after 1635.

I am writing these lines to tell you about us and to find out about you. For our part, as things stand now, thanks be to God, I am feeling better and better. Were it not for a slight fever that has taken hold of me for a day or two, I would have come to thank you for your great kindness to me.

And you, Mademoiselle, how is everything with you? Are you in better health now than you were a few days ago? Are you stronger? But are you taking better care of your health than in the past? And are you being brave? Do you let yourself get depressed sometimes? For the love of God, Mademoiselle, strengthen yourself on both of those points so that you may serve God in holiness and justice for many years to come.

Also, please let me know where disciplines can be bought because I need about a dozen of them. But there is no need to send me an answer right now; a day or two will be soon enough.

My cordial greetings to M. de Vincy.<sup>2</sup> I remain, for you and for him, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

100. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Monsieur le Jarriel, the banker, has very kindly undertaken for us the forwarding of the bulls uniting Saint-Lazare with our little Congregation and has had them directed to Monsieur Marchand.<sup>1</sup> As soon as you receive the said documents, Monsieur, please take

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<sup>2</sup>Mademoiselle du Fay's brother, Antoine Hennequin, Sieur de Vincy.

**Letter 100.** - Autograph letter. According to Coste, the original was at the Hospice Saint-Nicolas in Metz. The present location of the letter is unknown.

<sup>1</sup>An expeditionary banker at the court of Rome.

the trouble to go and see Monsieur Marchand and to begin work on the matter, in order to get them expedited as soon as possible. They are absolutely necessary to us, because of the opposition we are getting<sup>2</sup> and on account of which they are pressuring us back here. I still dare to hope from the kindness of Messieurs Le Bret<sup>3</sup> and de Luzarches that they will continue their charity to us at this crucial time in our establishment. We shall owe to both of them what God alone can give them. You can address your letters to the above-mentioned gentleman, Monsieur Jarriel, as to an old friend of ours to whom, after God, we owe a considerable part of the success of this affair.

It remains for me to entreat you to take care of your health above all things, and while waiting for God to bless the outcome of your work, I remain in His love, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, March 2, 1632

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<sup>2</sup>The opposition was coming from the monks of Saint-Victor; from Louis de Mesgrigny, the Abbot of Quincy; and from the pastors of the city, faubourgs, and suburbs of Paris. Called to Saint-Lazare at the beginning of the sixteenth century by Etienne de Poncher, the Bishop of Paris, who was hoping to reform the abuses by a change in administration, the monks of Saint-Victor had not ceased to occupy the priory ever since, and had come to consider it their own property. However, this was not the case. All the provisions indicated that the bishops of Paris reserved for themselves the right to recall the prior and even to replace the monks of Saint-Victor with other ecclesiastics. Moreover, on December 5, 1625, the monks of Saint-Victor Abbey had decided that the various houses of the order would, henceforth, be independent from the Abbey. This was, in fact, a renunciation of their rights over Saint-Lazare. Rome took its time before accepting Saint Vincent's petition. The Bull of Union was signed by Urban VIII, March 15, 1635, but it was never sent. Alexander VII granted a new one on April 18, 1655. (Cf. Arch. Nat. MM 534; cf. also vol. XIII, no. 112.)

<sup>3</sup>Jacques Le Bret, Canon of Toul, Auditor of the Rota, and cleric of the Apostolic Chamber, was a native of Paris. He was appointed to the See of Toul on April 24, 1645, and consecrated at Saint-Louis-des-Français. The King of France, who had not been notified diplomatically, refused to recognize him. The dispute was settled by the death of the party concerned; he passed away in Rome on June 15 of the same year. Jacques Le Bret rendered many services to the Congregation of the Mission.



101. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am very glad that you have taken as you should the news of Mademoiselle de Potrincourt's<sup>1</sup> illness; I have not heard anything about her for five or six days now. But I am sorry that you are allowing your spirit to plunge into certain useless apprehensions which are more a hindrance than an advancement to your salvation. I beg you, place yourself completely in that holy love which is brought about by trust in God and mistrust of oneself, Mademoiselle. Leave that fear, which seems to me rather servile at times, to those to whom God has not given the understanding of Him that He has given to you. Above all, disregard those thoughts which seem to weaken the holy faith that God has placed in you.<sup>2</sup> Disregard even more the author from whom they come who has no power but that which you give him. Now *absit*<sup>3</sup> that you have ever given him that control! The tears brought on by your suffering from this problem are so many witnesses of what I am telling you. So be at peace in that regard.

As for Monsieur de Marillac,<sup>4</sup> I consent to everything that you think proper, but take care not to implicate yourself. I think that in these matters one must be disposed to take the advice of the

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**Letter 101.** - Original autograph letter, Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity.

<sup>1</sup>Françoise de Mornay, the wife of Jacques de Biancourt, the Seigneur de Potrincourt.

<sup>2</sup>Saint Louise had formerly been assailed by doubts concerning the immortality of the soul and the existence of God; might these temptations have come back to her?

<sup>3</sup>*Far be it.*

<sup>4</sup>The biographers of Saint Louise suppose that Saint Vincent is referring to Saint Louise's uncle, Michel de Marillac, imprisoned by Richelieu at Châteaudun (where he died on August 7, 1632) because he had allied himself with the Cardinal's enemies, and that Saint Louise wanted to make an attempt to obtain his liberty. (Cf. Richemont, *op. cit.*, p. 100; Baunard, *op. cit.*, p. 114; Emmanuel de Broglie, *La Vénérable Louise de Marillac* [Paris: Lecoffre, 1911], p. 65.) This is only one hypothesis among others. It is not at all certain that the former Keeper of the Seals, Michel de Marillac, is meant here. Saint Vincent also could have had in mind, for example, Louis de Marillac, Marshal of France, whom Cardinal Richelieu also imprisoned and then executed, or even Michel de Marillac, the grandson of the former Keeper of the Seals.

person from whom one has asked counsel. When he tells you something contrary to your opinion, you must not go back to it again. Do, however, what Our Lord suggests to you. Of one thing I can well assure you, He will give you nothing but perfect advice. I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

102. - TO N.

[1632]<sup>1</sup>

You are well aware that the religious of [Saint-Victor] are contesting our possession of Saint-Lazare.<sup>2</sup> You could hardly believe the acts of submission I have rendered to them as the Gospel prescribes, although truly they are not called for. M. Duval has assured me of this as has everyone who knows what this affair involves. Things will be as Our Lord wishes. He knows that His goodness has made me as truly indifferent on this occasion as during any other difficulty I have had. Please help me to thank Him for this.

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**Letter 102.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXII, end, p. 101.

<sup>1</sup>The content of the letter prompts us to assign this date.

<sup>2</sup>On December 17, 1631, the religious of Saint-Victor had brought forth a first request to prevent the contract of union. They presented a second one to have it broken on May 13, 1632. In spite of the support of the Abbot of Quincy and the pastors of Paris and the suburbs, they were unsuccessful. On August 21, the Parlement decided to look at the agreement and, on September 7, ordered its registration. At the same time it required that the Priests of the Mission present themselves "to the Archbishop of Paris in order to obtain letters of perpetual establishment in the above-mentioned house of Saint-Lazare." (Arch. Nat. M 212, file 4.)

102a. - R. DOGNON<sup>1</sup> TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

Two reasons seem fitting to me for dedicating to you *Le Bon Laboureur*.<sup>2</sup> The first is the gratitude owed to you by all good tillers of the soil for the profit that comes to them through your holy exercises, which oblige all those who experience them or have some knowledge of them to bless God. For the good of our century, He has passed on to you, by a metempsychosis,<sup>3</sup> which He alone can bring about, the spirit, affections, and design, together with the name of the great Patron of missionaries, Saint Vincent Ferrer.<sup>4</sup> The apostolic missions he instituted in his time are manifestly more necessary now than they ever were before. May God be blessed for having given you that spirit and the ardent charity of Jesus Christ which urges you, as we see, to run to the assistance of souls who cost Him all His blood.

Blessed also be those who, urged on by the same charity, assist you in this truly laborious yet noble and honorable undertaking. There is none more excellent since it divinizes the men whom it associates with the works of the Savior, and makes them His collaborators in the salvation of the very men for whom He died. Men among whom I do not doubt that we must number all the firstborn at whom the world has scarcely deigned to look, tillers of the soil and other villagers. They have been of singular importance to Our Lord. In order to show them His special love, He wanted them to be the first to have the news of His birth into the world. And as if He had been born primarily for them, He went about during the years of His public life seeking them everywhere in villages large and small to announce to them the Kingdom of God. Finally, He deigned by a

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**Letter 102a.** - Letter printed at the front of the volume *Le Bon Laboureur*, published in 1632. The original has been lost. The text, however, was published with commentaries in the *Annales* (1941/1942), pp. 276-279 and was reprinted in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, pp. 8-11.

<sup>1</sup>Richard Dognon, a Canon of Verdun, deceased in 1638.

<sup>2</sup>*Le Bon Laboureur* . . . , second edition, published in 1632 (the approbation dates from 1630). Work of more than seven hundred pages treating practically and familiarly of the virtues proper to tillers of the soil.

<sup>3</sup>The passing of the soul at death into another body either human or animal.

<sup>4</sup>Saint Vincent Ferrer, a Spanish Dominican, was born in Valencia on January 23, 1350. He is noted for his labors to terminate the Great Western Schism, a period when there were two lines of claimants to the Papal Throne (1378-1417). He traveled throughout Europe preaching the need for repentance and reform. By his personal influence and constant direction, he was able to prevent enthusiasm from degenerating into fanaticism. Miracles in the order of nature and grace accompanied his preaching. He died in Vannes on April 5, 1419. Pope Callistus III canonized him on June 3, 1455.

prerogative of incomparable favor to associate them with Him in the works of His Passion, for Simon the Cyrenean who helped Him to carry His Cross was, says the Evangelist, a man who was coming from the village.

All these considerations are worthy of that burning zeal which you have for poor village people. You certainly have this consolation and advantage in your undertakings that, although our century is indiscreetly critical, and although the majority of people, since they judge the projects of other people's devotion by their own feelings, take part in censuring all new establishments whether they be of religious orders or of other congregations or communities, yours, nonetheless, by a certain secret privilege which is a manifest blessing of God, remains sheltered from the contrariness of tongues. It meets with general approval both in the mind and on the lips of all those who know what it is. They have savored the good odor with which you fill every place to which you go and they recognize in the abundance and sweetness of your fruits that the tree which produces them can only be thoroughly good.

Now, besides this general reason, I have a personal one for dedicating *Le Bon Laboureur* to you. The reception you gave my book on its first appearance obliges it to present itself to you again now that it is ready to be published a second time. Since it is in the world only to be used for the instruction of country people, it comes to offer you all that it is and all that it can be, begging from you the influence it needs to be profitably employed. Not that, heretofore, it has been unsuccessful, for, thanks be to God, it has surpassed the hopes of its author and has been received better than it deserved wherever it has appeared. But, because the recommendation received from you up to the present has lent it credibility, it is convinced that when it is henceforth fully endorsed by you, you will treat it as your very own, and that with an extraordinary charity you will supply for its defects which are only too frequent.

It would have been better for it to have received its own education from you before undertaking the instructions of others. But to tell the truth, the same thing happened to me that once befell a great Spanish clergyman, Master Avila,<sup>5</sup> when he saw the Company of Jesus established by Saint Ignatius. "There," he said, "is a project which I had conceived, but in such a confused way that my spirit was not able to bring it to birth." I say that in some way the same thing befell me, without for all that wishing to enter into comparison with that great man. And in fact it is a truth that I believe I once told you. I had been thinking for a long time of contributing

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<sup>5</sup>Blessed John of Avila, born in 1500, Apostle of Andalusia, died in 1569.

*what I could to assist the poor in the villages, since I was under an obligation to do so by my birth, by my role as a priest, and by the necessities everyone can see only too often everywhere.*

*As I was preparing to carry out this plan according to my capabilities, I fortunately heard about the institution of your Congregation, dedicated to the salvation of the same people for whom I intended to work. It was this common partiality for and aim at a like goal which made me earnestly seek the honor of your acquaintance which I shall cherish all my life, and the means of learning through the practice of your works, in which out of your kindness you afforded me as much experience as my free time allowed, how to be a good missionary. This experience led me to realize especially that I was finding in your missions what I had sought with such great difficulty and not found elsewhere: the right way to assist tillers of the soil effectively. And had it not been that the poor Bon Laboureur had even then more than half appeared, and that its printing was almost completed, I would have withheld it completely, but only until it had learned at your school what it would afterwards be obliged to repeat to the people in the villages. However, as it was far advanced, and because you ordered it that way, I allowed it to appear on condition that, if it were once again to be printed, you would do it the charity of correcting its defects. It is the carrying out of that promise that it has been awaiting, of which your weighty and continual occupations, as I see it, have deprived it up to now.*

*People do not cease, however, urging it to make its appearance once again just as it is. And it is doing so to please those who are encouraging it, but not without taking on your livery so that it might have more reasons to call itself your own. It has taken the rules from your missions and the organization of your Confraternity of Charity, in order to make them known, everywhere that it is found, as exercises quite suitable for tillers of the soil, and of a piety both exemplary and greatly necessary in the villages. It still hopes that you will one day do it complete charity and keep your promise, so that it may appear less defective the third time it is published, if such comes to pass.*

*That is what I am asking of you, Monsieur. Also, continue the honor of your gracious kindness to me with the place you have given me among your Missionaries, and the title, Monsieur, of your most humble and affectionate servant.*

R. DOGNON

*Addressed: Monsieur Vincent de Paul, Superior of the Priests of the Mission of Paris*

103. - TO SAINT LOUISE

It is better, therefore, to act in the way you wrote to me, Mademoiselle, and to postpone your plans so as not to run any risk. If between now and my return you find some trustworthy person, act; if not, wait.<sup>1</sup> Our Lord will see to the matter, especially if you are happy at the foot of the Cross where you are at present and which is the best place in this world you could be. So be happy there, Mademoiselle, and fear nothing. Do not forget us in your prayers, and I will take care to recommend you to our good country people.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

104. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1634]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

This note will serve three purposes: to say good day to you and to thank you for that altar cloth you so kindly sent us; it was so beautiful and delightful that it almost stole my heart away with pleasure yesterday seeing your own in it. Even though I did not know it was there, I saw it the moment I entered the chapel. The pleasure lasted all day yesterday and still lingers with an unex-

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**Letter 103.** - Original autograph letter, Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity.

<sup>1</sup>Along with the biographers of Saint Louise, we can interpret these words as referring to steps she wished to take for the deliverance either of Michel de Marillac, the former Keeper of the Seals, or of Marshal Louis de Marillac.

**Letter 104.** - Autograph letter. Seventeenth or eighteenth century copy at the Hospital of Pernambuco (Brazil).

<sup>1</sup>Everything indicates that this letter was written before the institution of the Daughters of Charity. Might not the emphasis with which the Saint speaks of Saint Joseph indicate that he wrote it on March 19?

plainable tenderness which gives rise to a number of thoughts within me. God willing, I shall be able to share these with you, contenting myself, meanwhile, with telling you that I am asking God to adorn your soul with His perfect and divine love while you embellish His house with so many beautiful adornments.

The third purpose is to request you not to go to the poor today. In that way you will honor the inactivity of the Son of God and that of Saint Joseph, who, although he had the power of heaven and earth in his care and under his authority, nonetheless, wished to appear powerless. Send Madame Richard to them. Perhaps God will then impart to her some grace that she needs and to you, some degree of humility, of compassion for the sick, or of self-knowledge — your powerlessness to advance towards the object of your fervent aspiration.

In short, you will profit if you do this, because Our Lord wishes it so, in Whose love and in that of His holy Mother and of Saint Joseph, I am your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

105. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[May 1632]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

What you tell me about the Marshal de Marillac seems worthy of great compassion and distresses me.<sup>2</sup> Let us honor therein the

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**Letter 105.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 74.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written on the eighth, ninth, or tenth of May as the content dictates.

<sup>2</sup>Louis de Marillac, the Comte de Beaumont-le-Roger and Marshal of France; Michel de Marillac, the Keeper of the Seals; and Louis de Marillac, Louise de Marillac's father, were sons of the same father. The first mentioned, who was the youngest of the three, was an ambassador in Savoy, Italy, Lorraine and Germany, the Commissary General of the armies of Louis XIII, a Field Marshal, the Captain General of the Queen's men-at-arms, Lieutenant General for the dioceses of Metz, Toul, and Verdun, Governor of the town and city of Verdun,

good pleasure of God and the happiness of those who honor the suffering of the Son of God by their own. The way our relatives go to God is of no importance to us, provided they go to Him. Now, the good use of this kind of death is one of the most certain paths to eternal life. Let us not feel sorry for him then, but let us accept the adorable Will of God.

106. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1632 and 1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you forever!

Here I am, your neighbor, since noon.<sup>2</sup> I sent someone to see if you were at home around two o'clock, but you had gone to pray. If you would kindly take the trouble to come here tomorrow right after dinner, we will hear from you in person what you have been writing to us. In the meantime, I beg you to honor the interior states of abandonment in which the saints, indeed even the Saint of saints, found themselves at times, and the closer union they afterwards enjoyed with God. I bid you good evening and am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

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and Marshal of France. He distinguished himself at the siege of Montauban, where he was wounded; at the battle of the Ile de Ré; at the siege of La Rochelle; at the taking of Privas; and elsewhere. He was the King's Lieutenant General to the army of Italy when Richelieu decided to arrest him. The Cardinal Minister had him seized by his commissioners on October 30, 1630, at the camp of Felizzo in Piedmont, and kept him in prison for many long months. The death sentence was passed against him in Rueil on May 8, 1632, and carried out two days later on the Place de Grève in Paris.

**Letter 106.** - Original autograph letter, Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written at the time when Saint Vincent was established at Saint-Lazare (after 1631) and Saint Louise was living near the Collège des Bons-Enfants (before May 1636).

<sup>2</sup>Saint Vincent often used to go to the Collège des Bons-Enfants.



I cannot resist telling you that I intend to give you quite a scolding tomorrow for giving way as you do to those useless and futile apprehensions. Oh! prepare yourself for a good talking-to!

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

### 107. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[May 1632]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

As for your little retreat,<sup>2</sup> make it in a leisurely way according to the order set down in the *Introduction* by the Bishop of Geneva,<sup>3</sup> but make only two meditations a day: one hour in the morning and half an hour after dinner. In the intervening time, read something from Gerson<sup>4</sup> or the lives of the holy widows to whom you have a more particular devotion. Use the remaining time to reflect on your past life and on the time you still have left. But please do all this quite calmly, after you have changed your lodgings, and be satisfied with doing so for six days. Do not forget me in your prayers. Perhaps I shall make my retreat at the same time. May God grant us the grace to make it well!

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**Letter 107.** - Autograph letter. According to Coste, the original was at the Provincial House of the Daughters of Charity in Turin. The present location of the letter is unknown.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written at the time Saint Louise was moving. Certain indications lead us to believe that this was in May 1632, a few days before her retreat for the Ascension. Either the change of lodging planned for the end of 1631 had been delayed or Saint Louise had taken temporary lodgings.

<sup>2</sup>"I would really like to make eight to ten days of retreat twice a year, namely, on the days between Ascension and Pentecost, to honor the grace God gave His Church in giving it His Holy Spirit to guide it, and the choosing of the Apostles to announce His Holy Gospel. In order to put this Gospel into practice, I shall listen to it attentively and have a special devotion to the law of God, His commandments. The other days of retreat will be during Advent. . . ." (*Ecrits spirituels*, A. 1.) A tear prevents us from knowing the remainder of the text.

<sup>3</sup>*Introduction to the Devout Life*, by Saint Francis de Sales.

<sup>4</sup>Saint Louise writes in one of her letters to Abbé de Vaux (L. 63): "After confession, the reading is from Gerson or another similar book which prompts one to the love of God." Gerson's literary work is extensive. Among the books written or translated into French, which

I am, in His love and in that of His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

108. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[May or June 1632]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Jesus Christ be with you!

If with M. Compaing's<sup>2</sup> advice you think it advisable to dismiss that woman, do so. If you need money for that purpose, I shall pay it. I am involved up to my ears with a large number of retreatants, an appointed bishop, a First Président,<sup>3</sup> two doctors, a professor in theology, and M. Pavillon,<sup>4</sup> in addition to our exercises. All that, I

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could have been recommended to Saint Louise, we point out the following: *l'Opus tripartitum*, *La Doctrine de bien vivre en ce monde*, *Les règles de bien vivre*, *Le trésor de Sapience*, and *La mendicité spirituelle*. *The Imitation of Jesus Christ*, sometimes attributed to Gerson, does not appear in this list. Coste notes that, elsewhere, Saint Vincent subscribes to the opinion that it was written by Thomas a Kempis.

**Letter 108.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>It would seem that this letter was written just after Saint Louise had changed lodgings and when she was still in the parish of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.

<sup>2</sup>Guillaume Compaing, the son of the Seigneur de l'Estang, had the honor of being assisted at his first Mass by Saint Francis de Sales. He lent his house to the priests of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet and entered their community himself in 1621. He did a great deal of good, both for the parish of Saint-Nicolas, whose vicar he remained for forty-three years, and for the Daughters of Sainte-Geneviève, whose director he was. The reconstruction of the parish church cost him a large amount of money and even his life for he died August 21, 1665, crushed by the fall of a scaffolding. (Cf. Darche, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 348-351.)

<sup>3</sup>The chief justice of the Parlement of Paris. After the King and the Chancellor, the First Président was the senior law-officer of the realm.

<sup>4</sup>Nicolas Pavillon was born in Paris, November 17, 1597. As a very young priest he placed himself under the direction of Saint Vincent, who had him teach catechism, employed him in the work of the missions, and sent him to the Charities where his presence was deemed useful. More than once he entrusted him with the direction of the conferences and retreats for

must say, prevents me from coming to see you.<sup>5</sup> For that reason, please send me the report you mentioned to me.

I am very pleased with your fine lodgings, and I shall have a word with Germaine at her convenience. M. Belin is here. As regards that gentleman for M. Renouard, you must ask for him through little Hermite; he knows him. You will have to tell him that he is the one he wanted to give us, the one who was formerly a merchant. Your son is here; he returns to me better and better each time.

Adieu, Mademoiselle, I am your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

109. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[June 1632]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

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ecclesiastics. Appointed to the bishopric of Alet in 1637, Pavillon accepted only upon the Saint's entreaties. This elevation did not deter him from his apostolic works. He gave a mission in Rueil at Richelieu's invitation; then in Saint-Germain-en-Laye at the King's request. He was consecrated at Saint-Lazare, August 22, 1639, and went to his diocese accompanied by Etienne Blatiron, a priest of the Mission. A zealous, intelligent Bishop, dedicated to reform, he justified the expectations placed in him. His episcopate would have been more fruitful had he been more on his guard against Jansenistic ideas. Saint Vincent begged him in vain to sign the formulary. The Bishop of Alet died December 8, 1677. There are several biographies of this prelate, some published, others in manuscript form. The most recent, written by M. Etienne Dejean, is entitled: *Un prélat indépendant au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, Nicolas Pavillon, évêque d'Alet* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1909).

<sup>5</sup>Saint Vincent opened wide the doors of his house to persons wishing to make their retreat there. His hospitality was gratuitous. God alone knows the countless number of priests and lay people from every country and walk of life whom he received, either at the Bons-Enfants or at Saint-Lazare. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXVI, pp. 119 ff.)

**Letter 109.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter needs to be placed near no. 110. It was written prior to the departure of Saint Louise for Villeneuve, where she was on June 27.

*Mon Dieu*, Mademoiselle, how many faults I commit in your regard! Yesterday I assured you that I would have the pleasure of coming to see your devout and beautiful paradise<sup>2</sup> today and that I would see Madame Goussault,<sup>3</sup> the President's wife, and Mademoiselle Poulaillon.<sup>4</sup> And yet I did neither one nor the other, but went off to the country. I have just returned from there. I went to work at the Charity of Champigny<sup>5</sup> which really needs your presence. I most humbly beg you to forgive me and to go to Villeneuve tomorrow, if Madame Goussault and Mademoiselle Poulaillon will take you there. Please write to them about it this morning. If neither of them can go, I wonder if you would be uncomfortable in the boat to Joigny<sup>6</sup> which leaves at eight o'clock on Saturday. I think not, because it is covered. When you are in Villeneuve, stay at Mademoiselle Tranchot's house<sup>7</sup> and give the Pastor the letter I write to him, the tenor of which you will see.

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<sup>2</sup>Saint Louise's new home.

<sup>3</sup>In 1613 Geneviève Fayet had married Antoine Goussault, Seigneur de Souvigny, Councillor of the King and President of the *Chambre des Comptes* of Paris. Five children were born of the marriage. Widowed in 1631, she dedicated herself untiringly to works of charity. She was the first to have the idea of an association of ladies for the relief of the sick at the *Hôtel-Dieu* and was the first superioress of the group. It was thanks to her that the Daughters of Charity were called to the Hospital of Angers. Her name recurs constantly in Saint Vincent's letters to Saint Louise. She died on September 20, 1639, in the exercise of charity.

<sup>4</sup>Marie de Lumague was the widow of François de Pollalion, a gentleman in ordinary of Louis XIII's household. She was among those devout widows whom Saint Vincent put to work in the apostolate. Born in Paris, November 29, 1599, married at the age of eighteen and widowed shortly after, she made a vow of continence and placed herself under the direction of Saint Vincent. Together with Saint Louise and other charitable ladies, she visited the Charities, instructed little girls, and took alms to the poor. She especially wanted to gather together and reform delinquent girls and to this end she founded the Daughters of Providence. Saint Vincent worked on the rules of this institute, procured funds for it and good directors as well, and obtained its approbation by the King and the Archbishop of Paris. Mademoiselle de Pollalion died September 4, 1657. (Cf. Hyacinthe Collin, *Vie de la Vénérable Servante de Dieu Marie Lumague, veuve de M. Pollalion* [Paris: Cl. J.-B. Hérisant fils, 1744]; Abbé L. Teillet, *Histoire de l'Union chrétienne de Fontenay-le-Comte* [Fontenay-le-Comte: L.-P. Gouraud, 1898].) Saint Vincent always writes *Poulaillon* instead of *Pollalion*.

<sup>5</sup>Champigny-sur-Marne (Val-de-Marne).

<sup>6</sup>A town situated on the banks of the Yonne, one of the tributaries of the Seine.

<sup>7</sup>Saint Louise wrote beside the address the following words taken from the letter of October 12, 1631: "Mademoiselle Tranchot really wants you in Villeneuve where the Charity is going badly."

There will be no harm in your instructing the girls only; it will facilitate the means of winning their mothers over to God. As for the Charity, you will find only nine sisters in the confraternity; try to get some others. If we can, we shall send you Monsieur Pavillon to preach some Sunday.

I shall say nothing to you about the rest. Our Lord will advise you as to what you must do. Please take care of your health and honor Our Lord's cheerfulness of heart. For my part, I beg God to bring you back in perfect health, full of merit, and laden with spoils from the enemy of the empire of God, in Whose love I am your servant.

V. D. P.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

#### 110. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN VILLENEUVE-SAINT-GEORGES

Mademoiselle,

Your letter of the twenty-seventh was given to me here in the house. I wrote to M. Pavillon right away asking him to go and see you and I sent him your letter; he has not answered me. As soon as I receive an answer, I shall send it to you. Otherwise, M. [Souffliers],<sup>1</sup> who rather enjoyed teaching catechism in Villeneuve, will come. M. de la Salle is not here either.

I certainly had no doubt at all that you would find it very difficult to reestablish the Charity and more so than you tell me.

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**Letter 110.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 29.

<sup>1</sup>The copyist wrote *Soudier*, but this was an obvious distraction, because the two Le Soudier brothers did not enter the Congregation until 1638. François Souffliers, born in Montmirail in 1606, in the diocese of Soissons, received at the Bons-Enfants in August 1629, and ordained a priest in September 1631, was Superior of Notre-Dame de la Rose from 1642 to 1644. On the feast of Saint Matthias [February 24], 1642, he pronounced his vows. Saint Vincent recommended that his manner of dealing with heretics be imitated.

But blessed be God that there is some reason to hope you will set it up again!

As for the difficulties you reported to me, I think it wise for you to act as you have written to me. Mademoiselle Poulaillon told me that she hopes to spend Saturday night at your house, and I wrote to Madame Goussault that they were counting on her in that town to pay a visit to the school teacher of Villeneuve on Sunday afternoon. *O Dieu!* What a virtuous little group! I beg Our Lord to bind your hearts together into one, which will be His own, and to strengthen you in your work.

Paris, July 7, 1632

### III. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN VILLENEUVE-SAINT-GEORGES

Saint-Lazare, July 10, 1632

Mademoiselle,

Blessed be God, Mademoiselle, that in the midst of so much work you are well and that He has blessed your efforts! I really do think it would be well to establish a schoolmistress in Villeneuve, but where shall we find one? From a letter written to me by M. Belin, I gather that Germaine would not mind going there; but how can we withdraw her from Villepreux if someone else is not put there? And then, where shall we find that someone? I surely cannot see any way to do it, especially in the little time you have before seeing Mademoiselle d'Attichy. We shall see about it when you return, which will probably be some day next week. In the meantime, please give the mothers of your pupils the hope that you will send them a teacher as soon as you can, or that you will come to see them and discuss the means of housing and maintaining the schoolteacher. We shall be expecting you then during that time.

Please find out how the Charity in Crosnes<sup>1</sup> is doing. It is a little village as far from [Villeneuve]<sup>2</sup> as the Saint-Victor gate is from Notre-Dame, or thereabouts. If you had a horse to go there, you would not lose any time.

112. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

July 12, 1632

As soon as I have received the statements that the Congregation wishes from the Nuncio<sup>1</sup> and from the Archbishop,<sup>2</sup> I shall send them to you, if indeed we can obtain them. For, it is true that they are trying to cause us trouble as you informed me, even the person from whom we should expect the greatest assistance after God. But all that would not surprise me. It is my sins which give me reason to be afraid, not the outcome of the affair. Sooner or later, that will be settled both there and here. But I could not express to you how much the deceit amazes me. The Father General<sup>3</sup> denies

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<sup>1</sup>In Essonne, an *arrondissement* of Corbeil two kilometers from Villeneuve. An *arrondissement* is an administrative district, a division of a *Département*, administered by a sub-prefect.

<sup>2</sup>The copyist of the Saint Paul manuscript inadvertently wrote *Villepreux*.

Letter 112. - Reg. 2, p. 2.

<sup>1</sup>Alessandro Bichi, born in Siena in 1598, was first a substitute Court auditor; then Bishop of Isola, May 5, 1628; and Nuncio to Naples. Transferred to the See of Carpentras on July 2, 1630, he was named Nuncio to Paris on September 6 and remained in that post until March 26, 1634, the date of his recall to Rome. In the course of his nunciature in France, he was raised to the dignity of Cardinal-Priest on May 28, 1633, with the title of Saint Sabina. He died in Rome on May 25, 1657. (Cf. Tamizey de Larroque, *Le Cardinal Bichi, évêque de Carpentras - Lettres à Peiresc*, Paris, 1885.)

<sup>2</sup>Jean-François de Gondi.

<sup>3</sup>Charles de Condren born in Vauxbuin, near Soissons, December 16, 1588, entered the Oratory on June 17, 1617, after receiving his doctorate at the Sorbonne. He founded the seminary of Langres in 1619 and that of Saint-Magloire in 1620; then he established a house of his Order in Poitiers, where he remained for over a year. On his return to Paris, he made a fine reputation for himself as a director of souls, which attracted to him Gaston, Duc d'Orléans, brother of the King; Olier; Meyster; Amelote; and other eminent persons of rank. He governed the Oratory from October 30, 1629 to January 7, 1641, the day of his death. (Cf. Denis Amelote, *La vie du P. Charles de Condren* [Paris: H. Sara, 1643].) Saint Vincent held him in

it all, however, and has promised to write to Cardinal Bagni,<sup>4</sup> to the Ambassador,<sup>5</sup> and to Father René.<sup>6</sup> As soon as I have his letters, I shall send them to you. In the meantime, please act in as Christian a manner as possible with those who are hampering us. I see them here, just as often and cordially, thank God, as I have been wont to do. It seems to me that, by the grace of God, not only do I feel no aversion towards them, but I honor and cherish them the more. Furthermore, I have not yet complained to Father de Gondi<sup>7</sup> about them, for fear of making him averse to his vocation. What they wrote from there is true, that Father B.<sup>8</sup> went to give a mission in Normandy with six or seven others about two weeks after Easter, and that I sent them M. Renar<sup>9</sup> because they entreated me to do so in order that they might conform themselves to us. Since then, one of their men came to spend two or three days at one of our missions in this diocese to see how we do things. If they wish to come more often, they will be welcome. I

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high esteem. "He spoke to me about him in terms that might seem unbelievable," writes Jean-Jacques Olier (*Mémoires autographes*, vol. II, p. 225), "and I remember that he said to me concerning him: 'There has not been found a man like him, *non est inventus similis illi*'; and a thousand other similar things, going even so far as to fall on his knees and strike his breast, when he learned of his death, and accuse himself, with tears in his eyes, of not having honored the holy man as much as he deserved."

<sup>4</sup>Giovanni Francesco Guidi di Bagno, born in October 1578, was the Bishop of Cervia and Rieti; the Vice-legate of Avignon; Nuncio in Flanders, then in France (1627); Cardinal in 1629; and died July 24, 1641.

<sup>5</sup>The Marquis de Brassac.

<sup>6</sup>Father René Barrême, the favorite disciple of Father de Condren, was born in Arles, received into the Oratory in 1623, and died in Arles on January 16, 1685. He had a special talent for the missions and excelled in giving catechetical instruction, which he taught with the aid of large pictures representing the principal mysteries and the Sacraments. (Cf. Ingold, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 246, n. 1.)

<sup>7</sup>Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, after the death of his wife, became an Oratorian Father in 1627.

<sup>8</sup>Possibly François Bourgoing who preceded Saint Vincent in the parish of Clichy and was to succeed Father de Condren as Superior of the Oratory.

<sup>9</sup>Among the members of the Tuesday conferences, Saint Vincent had no one, perhaps, who was a more zealous and useful auxiliary than François Renar, born in Paris, April 25, 1604. This holy priest divided his time between spiritual direction and works of charity. Every morning from six o'clock until noon, he was at the disposition of his penitents, among whom was Jeanne Potier, the wife of Michel de Marillac. He was seen at the Hôtel-Dieu, visiting and instructing the sick. He preached in hospitals and jails, taught catechism to children, and went



could not consider myself a Christian if I did not try to participate in the *utinam omnes prophetarent* of Saint Paul.<sup>10</sup>

Alas! Monsieur, the countryside is so vast! There are people by the thousands filling up hell. All the ecclesiastics, with all the religious, would not suffice to remedy this misfortune! Should we be so dispicable as not to allow these people to devote themselves to the assistance of those poor souls who are constantly being lost! Oh! surely, that would render us guilty of hindering the accomplishment of the mission of Jesus Christ on earth. And if they wish to place obstacles in our way, we must pray, humble ourselves, and do penance for the sins we have committed in this holy ministry. Therefore, I beg you, Monsieur, not to stop seeing those Fathers, acting in their regard as Our Lord advises us to act towards those who try us and hinder us, and begging those to whom God has given good will towards us to do them no harm by word or by action.

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to proclaim the Gospel in villages, often with the Priests of the Mission. He took part in the missions given at the Quinze-Vingts, at the Pitié, at the Refuge, and at La Chapelle, where he undertook the teaching of catechism to the poor from Lorraine. Where was he not to be found? He brought the Good Word to the people of Poitou, Touraine, Saintonge, Auvergne, Champagne, Burgundy, and to "almost all the provinces of France," says his biographer. Saint Vincent invited him to give talks to the ordinands at Saint-Lazare. Like so many others, François Renar was curious enough to go and see the possessed nuns of Loudun, who were being talked about everywhere; he said Mass in their chapel, constantly distracted by their vociferations and their blasphemies. Towards the end of his life, when his infirmities no longer allowed him the same activity, he became the director of the nuns of Saint-Thomas. Death put an end to his work on January 14, 1653. (Cf. Louis Abelly, *L'idée d'un véritable prestre de l'Eglise de Jésus-Christ et d'un fidèle directeur des âmes, exprimée en la vie de M. Renar, prestre, directeur des religieuses du monastère de S. Thomas* [Paris: F. Lambert, n.d.]; Louis Abelly, *Les opuscules spirituels de Monsieur Renar, prestre, directeur des religieuses du monastère de S. Thomas* [Paris, n.p., 1698].)

<sup>10</sup>*Would that all were prophets.* Saint Vincent does not intend to make a textual quotation. The equivalent of these words is to be found in 1 Cor. 14:39 - "Set your hearts on prophecy, my brothers, and do not forbid those who speak in tongues." The allusion is even clearer in Nm. 11:29 - "But Moses answered him [Joshua], 'Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the people of the Lord were prophets! Would that the Lord might bestow his spirit on them all!'" (NAB)

113. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1632]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

It will be well for you to contact Madame Goussault and Mademoiselle Poulaillon to ask their opinion about Germaine. Just two days ago I became aware of that way of acting, which seems cordial and deferential to me. I may perhaps have offended them by having you make the final decision about your work without telling them.

114. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

[Between 1626 and 1635]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Since a very close friend of mine is involved in a case for which M. de Villenosse is the judge, my heart could not hide from him that I hoped to be able to render him some service through your kindness. I very humbly ask you, Mademoiselle, to do me the favor of taking an interest in the matter and of presenting the enclosed document to him with your recommendation. The eminent virtue of this person, his need, and your charity in my regard give me the confidence to bother you with this. My embarrassment at having to trouble you will make me more circumspect and

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**Letter 113.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 42.

<sup>1</sup>This letter seems to have been written close to the time when the first contacts were established between Saint Vincent, Madame Goussault, and Mademoiselle de Pollalion.

**Letter 114.** - Reg. 1, f<sup>o</sup> 68. The copyist notes that the original was written in Saint Vincent's hand.

<sup>1</sup>The name of Mademoiselle du Fay does not appear in any of the letters written before 1626 or after 1635.

reserved another time so as not to do so, on condition that you will not take the trouble of coming here and that you will not spare me in any way you judge me capable of serving you. I am, in the love of Jesus and His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your. . . .

The case is to be judged tomorrow. I beg you, Mademoiselle, to see to the recommendation today.

### 115. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1632]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

Charity towards those poor convicts is of incomparable merit before God. You have done well to assist them and will do well to continue in any way you can until I have the pleasure of seeing you, which will be in two or three days. Give a little thought to whether your Charity at Saint-Nicolas would be willing to take on the responsibility for them, at least for a time. You could help them with the money you have left. Indeed, it is difficult, and that is what makes me suggest the idea casually.<sup>2</sup>

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**Letter 115.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXVIII, beginning, p. 128.

<sup>1</sup>The content of the letter, as explained in note 2, prompts us to assign this date.

<sup>2</sup>From the day he was appointed Chaplain General of the galleys of France, Saint Vincent made every effort to improve both the spiritual and corporal conditions of the poor convicts who were waiting in the dungeons of the Conciergerie or in other Paris prisons to be sent to the galleys. In 1622, he rented a house for them in the faubourg Saint-Honoré, near Saint-Roch Church. In the contract signed April 17, 1625, by Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, his wife, and Saint Vincent, it is stipulated that the Missionaries will be bound in perpetuity "to assist the poor convicts spiritually so that they may profit by their corporal punishment." (Cf. vol. XIII, no. 59.) In 1632, the Saint obtained from the King and the city officials permission to turn an old square tower into a hospital for the sick galley slaves. It was situated near the Pont de la Tournelle, between the Porte Saint-Bernard and the Seine. Saint Vincent served as their Chaplain. Not satisfied with visiting them himself, he exhorted devout persons to come and bring them words of consolation. Saint Louise and her girls were associated with this work as with the others. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXVIII.) It would be unjust not to recall here that the priests of the parish of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, whose role has been so well highlighted by Abbé Schoenherr (*op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 127), rivaled the zeal of Saint Vincent and Saint Louise on behalf of the galley slaves in their parish. It is certain that from 1634 on, or

115a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1630 and 1638]

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have never been less satisfied with myself as far as you are concerned, because it has been such a long time since I have seen you. You may well believe that only an excess of work keeps me from doing so. I shall try to have that happiness tomorrow, begging you meanwhile to take care of your health. Send word to me about it, as to one who is, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Friday morning

116. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1632 and 1635]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

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perhaps even earlier, the chaplaincy of the galley slaves' house was entrusted to them. The Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement, probably spurred on by Saint Vincent, who needed support, undertook the same work. (Cf. René de Voyer d'Argenson, *Annales de la Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement*, ed. by H. Beauchet-Filleau [Marseille; Saint-Léon, 1900], pp. 54-56.)

**Letter 115a.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter. A gift of the Province of Rennes, this letter was submitted to the examination of Father Raymond Chalumeau, C.M., Archivist of the Congregation of the Mission in Paris. It was his considered opinion that the letter is an absolutely authentic original which can be placed between 1630 and 1638.

**Letter 116.** - The original autograph letter was at the Collège d'Antoura, near Beirut. Unfortunately, all the documents of this house were destroyed during the upheavals of 1914. However, there is a photocopy of the letter in the Archives of the Mission in Paris.

<sup>1</sup>Dates of the occupancy of Saint-Lazare (January 8, 1632) and of Mademoiselle du Fay's death. The letter seems to belong more likely to 1632 or 1633.

I approve of everything you wrote to me. Because Madame Goussault is in the country and Mademoiselle du Fay does not have her carriage, I shall try to come and see you tomorrow or the day after. Meanwhile, get much stronger.

I bid you good day and am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, Sunday morning

The young woman you take with you to Villeneuve<sup>2</sup> will have to be very determined; she will have much to suffer.<sup>3</sup>

#### 117. - TO SAINT LOUISE

I praise God, Mademoiselle, that you are not ill as Mademoiselle du Coudray<sup>1</sup> made me fear this morning. But is what you say true, that it is not so? Well, I am begging Our Lord that that be the case.

We shall, therefore, postpone Mademoiselle du Coudray's confession until the Blessed Virgin's feast day, since it seems that you want it that way without saying so, and know all about it. Besides, I have some business here in the house tomorrow morning. I wish a good evening to her as to you, and to your son the grace to do what you mentioned to me.

I did not answer you sooner because I have just come back from the city.

Good evening, Mademoiselle. Please offer to God the interior

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<sup>2</sup>Villeneuve-Saint-Georges (Val-de-Marne).

<sup>3</sup>This probably refers to a young woman destined to teach school in that locality. (Cf. no. 111.)

**Letter 117.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>A close friend of Saint Louise.

needs of him who is, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

118. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

[Between 1626 and 1635]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I would not have been so slow about seeing you to thank you for all the good things you have so kindly done for our chapel and for us, or rather, for Our Lord and His holy Mother, were it not that God chose to do me the favor of keeping me home with a slight fever which I have had since last Sunday. Please accept my thanks by means of these lines, Mademoiselle, along with the assurance that my heart, as seems fitting to me, would be most happy to see yours. But since Our Lord does not want this yet, may His Holy Name be blessed! However, I shall not fail to bring you to Our Lord in my unworthy prayers. I also recommend myself most humbly to yours, begging you to honor the holy tranquillity of Our Lord's soul by believing that you are His dear daughter and He your dear Father, and I, in His love, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

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**Letter 118.** - Reg. I, f<sup>o</sup> 68 v<sup>o</sup>. The copyist notes that the original was in the Saint's own handwriting.

<sup>1</sup>References to Mademoiselle du Fay appear in Saint Vincent's correspondence only between 1626 and 1635.

119. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1634]<sup>1</sup>

Since in conscience you can have [the matter taken care of without any fear]<sup>2</sup> and you realize that if you do not do so you are jeopardizing the transaction which so many people [want], ask Monsieur Clichun to do you this service, as he will gladly do it. If you are troubled by the doubt that you can deal with this affair in that manner, be at peace and think no more about it. If it is the treatment you get from your auditors, think of the fear of those who render an account before God at the moment of death. Let us try to act so rightly that we shall have reason to trust in the infinite goodness of the Auditor of our Life, our Sovereign Judge.

Thank you for the book [you] sent me and please take care of your health. It is no longer yours since you destine it for God.<sup>3</sup> And my heart is no longer my heart, but yours, in that of Our Lord, Whom I desire to be the object of our one love. Please remember to offer to God a matter that affects us.

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**Letter 119.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The letter was written before the institution of the Daughters of Charity.

<sup>2</sup>The words placed in brackets here have been so carefully scratched out that we dare not assert that they are exact.

<sup>3</sup>Saint Louise always awaited the decision of her saintly director. We read in her writings: "I must persevere in awaiting the Holy Spirit, although I do not know the time of His coming. But, in accepting this lack of knowledge and my ignorance of the ways by which God wishes me to serve Him, I must leave myself completely at His disposal so as to belong entirely to Him. And to prepare my soul, I must give up everything willingly in order to follow Him." (*Ecrits spirituels*, A. 5.)

120. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN ASNIERES<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

My regards to the president,<sup>2</sup> as well as to the curate in Asnières, and to all your good women from the Charity. I recommend myself to their prayers.

Please tell the above-mentioned lady that I beg her, and also you, to help us thank God that our case concerning this house<sup>3</sup> was confirmed in Parlement the day before yesterday.

121. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1632 and 1636]<sup>1</sup>

In your opinion, Mademoiselle, am I not rather ungracious to you? Did your heart not murmur a little against mine for my being so close and not having seen you or sent you news of us? Now then, some day you will know the reason for all that before God.

I came here<sup>2</sup> yesterday to work on something I had to write. Perhaps I shall still be here tomorrow, but not without going into the city or without seeing you, perhaps at Mass.

In the meantime, I bid you good evening. I have scarcely given your son any direction at all yet. There goes the bell taking the pen from my hand.

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**Letter 120.** - Pémartin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 141, letter 140.

<sup>1</sup>A place near Paris. In February 1630, Saint Louise had visited the Confraternity in Asnières (*Ecrits spirituels*, A. 50), to which she had perhaps returned since that time.

<sup>2</sup>The president of the Charity.

<sup>3</sup>Perhaps the union with the Priory of Saint-Lazare.

**Letter 121.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter appears to have been written between the time Saint Vincent established himself at Saint-Lazare (after 1631) and while Saint Louise was still near the Collège des Bons-Enfants (before 1636).

<sup>2</sup>To the Collège des Bons-Enfants.



Good evening, Mademoiselle. I am, in the love of Our Lord,  
your most humble servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

122. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1632]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

We must wait for that good young lady to make up her mind. Madame Goussault wants to take the trip with Marie<sup>2</sup> before confiding her to you.

Draw up the rule; then I shall go over it and do what you asked me. Tell me the obstacles that you fear.

I begin my retreat today and am putting everything aside for later. Please pray to God for me.

I am, in His love. . . .

V. D. P.

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**Letter 122.** - Jules Gossin, *Saint Vincent de Paul peint par ses écrits* (Paris: J.J. Blaise, 1834), p. 376.

<sup>1</sup>Date of Marie Joly's entrance into the community.

<sup>2</sup>Marie Joly was employed at the Hôtel-Dieu, the Charity of Saint-Paul, that of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, and was the first Superior of the Sedan house where she remained from 1641 to 1654. Recalled from that city, she yielded to discouragement and ran away from the Motherhouse. A few days later, she was readmitted at her request and made up for her momentary weakness by exemplary conduct. On August 5, 1672, she was the Superior at Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas.

123. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Since I am unable to come and see you myself, I want you to know, Mademoiselle, that I am begging Our Lord to tell you Himself what you should do. Go ahead then and do *in nomine Domini* what you think our amiable and ever-adorable Savior is asking of you. I beg Him with all my heart to take you and to bring you back, to be the light of your heart and its gentle warmth, to let it know and love what He desires of you and, especially, to let you be the consolation of His dear daughters, and they yours, in His perfect love.

One of those Jacobin Fathers<sup>1</sup> was the Prior and the other the Novice Master two years ago. As for the candlesticks you gave to Sainte-Marie,<sup>2</sup> I commend you for that, provided they are not silver.

Remember me before God, in Whose love and in that of His holy Mother I am, for the superior who will be elected from your group<sup>3</sup> and for her young women, a most humble and obedient servant.

Monsieur Clichun returned half an hour after you yesterday.

124. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Monsieur du Coudray, your brother, wanted me to enclose this letter with the one he is writing to you and to join my prayers to

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**Letter 123.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Dominicans. Because their first monastery was situated on the rue Saint-Jacques in Paris, the Dominicans were popularly called the Jacobins.

<sup>2</sup>Convent of the Visitation nuns.

<sup>3</sup>The superior of the Charity in the parish of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.

**Letter 124.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), original autograph letter.

his, so that you may see fit to conclude the business you have with one another. I most humbly beg you, Monsieur, to do this as soon as possible, if you are not ready to leave soon and if your business can be concluded by someone else to whom you can send your power of attorney and some written statements. But I beg you that it not be to me, because I am too busy and do not at all understand business matters.

I know you will tell me that it was not your fault and that you have sought him out many times for that purpose, and will call me to witness myself that I have been a mediator between the two of you in order to reconcile you. But my answer to that is that the time was not ripe then, as it appears to be now from the frame of mind I seem to see in your brother. So, while awaiting your favorable reply concerning this matter, I recommend myself to your prayers and am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, September 19, 1632

Your brother would like two guaranteed and accurate copies of annates<sup>1</sup> from two different agents, M. Marchand and some other. I most humbly beg you, Monsieur, to send them to him.

*Addressed:* Monsieur du Coudray, Priest of the Mission

**125. - TO ANTOINE PORTAIL, IN MONTMIRAIL**

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

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<sup>1</sup>A tax, equivalent to one year's revenue, paid to the Holy See by the recipient of an ecclesiastical benefice or office.

Yesterday, I received your letter of the seventh of this month. It made me aware of the blessing Our Lord is pleased to continue bestowing on your mission, which consoles me as much as you can imagine. O Monsieur, how touched I was by the note you sent me concerning the success at Courboin<sup>1</sup> and the needs of Viffort!<sup>2</sup> Well now, may God be glorified for everything. May you recognize, Messieurs [sic], the gratitude you owe Him for having chosen to make use of you for that purpose. And may I be confused at seeing myself unworthy of cooperating in this good work!

I am, moreover, in arrears for not having written you with every coach. Lay the blame for it on some rather unusual difficulties I am having here.

What shall I say about your way of going to Joigny except for you to manage as you think best. But, if you do go on foot and take only one horse, I ask two things of you: that you travel by short stages and that those who are tired take turns riding the horse. If you have not yet sent anyone to Soissons, do not do so. The Bishop of Soissons<sup>3</sup> is supposed to be in this city soon. I will do what is necessary. If there is still some village that needs attention, what do you think, Monsieur, of leaving Messieurs Bécu<sup>4</sup> and Miloir<sup>5</sup> for that purpose? However, if it is only for three or four days, wait for them and leave as soon as you have finished. You are needed in Joigny where you will find Monsieur Pavillon, M. Renar, Messieurs Morel,<sup>6</sup> Massé,<sup>7</sup> and another from Saint-

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<sup>1</sup>A small locality in Aisne where, on June 19, 1622, Saint Vincent had established a Confraternity of Charity composed of men and women, for which he himself drew up a set of rules which we still possess. (Cf. vol. XIII, no. 137.)

<sup>2</sup>A small locality in Aisne.

<sup>3</sup>Simon Le Gras (1624-1656).

<sup>4</sup>Jean Bécu.

<sup>5</sup>François Miloir, a Priest of the Mission, was born in Abbeville. Around November 1630, he was received into the Congregation of the Mission where he remained only a short time.

<sup>6</sup>Perhaps Claude Morel, a renowned doctor of the Sorbonne born in Vitry-le-François, who became preacher to the King in 1640, Theologian for the diocese of Paris in 1662, and Dean of the school of theology. He died April 30, 1679, after taking an active part in the struggle against the Jansenists.

<sup>7</sup>This is neither Jean-Baptiste nor René Macé, both priests of Saint-Sulpice. In 1632 both men were too young to take part in a mission.

Nicolas,<sup>8</sup> besides Messieurs de Sergis and de Renel.<sup>9</sup> M. de la Salle is not there; he remained here because he is ill.

We gave orders for M. Pavillon to do the preaching, and for Messieurs Renar, Roche,<sup>10</sup> Grenu,<sup>11</sup> and Sergis to be responsible for the following: the first man, the Credo; the 2nd, the Commandments of God; the 3rd, the Our Father and the Hail Mary; and the [4th],<sup>12</sup> the Sacraments. As for the children's catechism, Messieurs Roche and Sergis are to be relieved when they are teaching the adult catechism, and you, Monsieur, will take care of directing the group. I pray Our Lord to grant you a generous share in His spirit and guidance for that purpose.

Courage, just undertake this holy work in that spirit, Monsieur. To that end, honor the prudence, foresight, meekness, and exactitude of Our Lord. You will do well if you have the rule observed as it should be. The blessing of God is found abundantly in doing so. Begin then with rising, retiring, prayer, the Divine Office, and entering and leaving church at the appointed time. O Monsieur, what a precious treasure is the habit formed by these things, and how many disadvantages are found in the contrary! *Mon Dieu!* why will we not take the trouble of doing this for God, since we see that most people are exact observers of the rule of life they have laid down for themselves in the world? Never, or very rarely, do lawyers fail to rise and retire, to go to and from court at the same hour; and most workmen do the same. Only we ecclesiastics are so fond of our ease that we work only according to the impulse of our inclinations. For the love of God, Monsieur, let us strive to

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<sup>8</sup>The community of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, founded by Adrien Bourdoise.

<sup>9</sup>Jacques de Renel, a Priest of the Mission, was born in 1606 in the diocese of Amiens, entered the Congregation of the Mission in August 1629, and was ordained a priest on Easter Sunday, 1631. His name appears here for the first and last time.

<sup>10</sup>Nicolas Roche, a Priest of the Mission, was born in Amiens, received into the Congregation of the Mission in 1629, and ordained a priest in 1631.

<sup>11</sup>Daniel Grenu, born in Abbeville on January 1, 1606, was ordained a priest in 1630 and received into the Congregation of the Mission in September 1631. He was a very active missionary and worked zealously in Champagne, Gascony, and Dauphiné.

<sup>12</sup>The text of the original reads: *and the 3rd*. Correction is necessary.

rid ourselves of this miserable sensuality which makes us prisoners of its whims.

I have written rather at length to Monsieur de Sergis concerning what you will have to do in case this letter finds you in Montmirail. Go then, *in nomine Domini*, and please greet or, rather, embrace our men *in nomine meo*. Write to me often. Tell our men that, of all the missions we have given, there is none more difficult or important than that of Joigny, both because of the mentality of the place and because of the power the Evil One has there in some matters. Tell them that *hoc genus daemoniorum non ejicitur nisi in oratione, maxima modestia et prudentia et humilitate*,<sup>13</sup> and that the men who make up the Company require those very virtues. Let them beware of two notable faults remarked during the preceding mission, namely, sensuality, not to say intemperance, and an exaggerated love of self, not to say gross vanity in sermons and discourses on this subject.

I beg you, Monsieur, to warn the Company of this so that they can avoid falling into these faults. Do not forget at Chapter to admonish the group in general and the individuals whom you see falling into these faults. For believe me, Monsieur, if we are not careful, we shall fall into these faults. If we do so, *O Dieu*, where shall we be? What will become of a company so important and nonetheless composed of sensual, effeminate, and immortified men? Who does not see that it cannot last long and that these vices are the source of all the others? Now then, Monsieur, for the love of God, pray with regard to this matter and see that it is done. I, wretch that I am, have reason to fear being the cause of all these faults because they are all to be found in me as in their source. From me they spread to the Company, or to a part of it. (For thank God, there are some people who are not like that. They rather mortify and humble themselves in all things.) Pray that God will

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<sup>13</sup>*This kind of demon is cast out only by prayer, the greatest moderation, prudence, and humility.* In this passage Saint Vincent amplifies the thought of Our Lord contained in Mt. 17:21 - "[This kind does not leave but by prayer and fasting]." (NAB)

forgive me and grant me the grace to correct myself. I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, November 28, 1632

*Addressed:* Monsieur Portail, Priest of the Mission, in Montmirail

126. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1632]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

I praise God that you have suffered no harm from your journey or from your short sojourn in Serain.<sup>2</sup> I beg Him to strengthen you completely, so that you may serve Him for the good of the little souls in the place where you are now.

As for what you tell me about Saint Benoîte, you will be honoring the spirit of Our Lord in her by the relationship of your work to hers and the remoteness of your customary place of residence.<sup>3</sup> If you cannot do this in all things, God be praised that you are doing

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**Letter 126.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 9.

<sup>1</sup>The last sentence leads us to believe that the letter was written around December 21, the anniversary of the death of M. Le Gras. What precedes appears to indicate that the Company of the Daughters of Charity had not yet been founded.

<sup>2</sup>A locality in Aisne near Origny-Sainte-Benoîte.

<sup>3</sup>Saint Benoîte (Benedicta), virgin and martyr, is honored by the Church on October 8, anniversary of her death. Her biographers relate that she was the daughter of a Roman senator and that, along with twelve companions, she came to live in Origny-sur-Oise, now Origny-Sainte-Benoîte, near Saint-Quentin, on a hill outside the town and beside the river. Every day she would leave her cell to exhort in a familiar way the inhabitants of the place and its surroundings. The conversions she made drew down upon her the anger of the persecutors, who had her beheaded on October 8. Saint Louise was imitating Saint Benoîte in her work and, like her, she was doubtless living in a place far from the town. Would not what is said here about Saint Benoîte give the impression that Saint Louise was then in Origny-Sainte-Benoîte?

it in something, while waiting to do more if His Divine Goodness so pleases. He who is faithful in a little, says Our Lord, will be set over a greater work. Be faithful to this little and perhaps Our Lord will have you do more. Only God knows whether or not that will contribute to the glory of M. Le Gras, for whose soul and for your own you wish me to pray.

127. - TO N.

[Around 1633]<sup>1</sup>

In conformity with the former practice of the Church, by which bishops would have instruction given in their own houses for a period of several days to those desiring to be promoted to Orders, the Archbishop<sup>2</sup> ordered that, from that time on, those in his diocese who had that desire would retire for ten days before each Order to the house of the Priests of the Mission in order to make a spiritual retreat. They practice meditation, so necessary for ecclesiastics; make a general confession of their whole past life; review moral theology, especially that which concerns the use of the sacraments; learn to perform well the ceremonies of all the functions of all the other Orders; and, finally, are instructed in all the other matters necessary for ecclesiastics. They are lodged and fed during that time. Such fruit is resulting from it, by the grace of God, that it has been observed that all those who have made this retreat lead a truly priestly life afterwards. Furthermore, most of them dedicate themselves in a very special way to works of piety. All of this is becoming evident to the public.<sup>3</sup>

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**Letter 127.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. II, sect. II, beginning, p. 215.

<sup>1</sup>Abelly says that this letter was written "about two years after" the episcopal decree pertaining to ordinands, which was issued February 21, 1631.

<sup>2</sup>Jean-François de Gondi.

<sup>3</sup>From 1631 to 1643, there were six retreats for ordinands given every year at the Mother-house of the Priests of the Mission. After 1643, the retreat held in the middle of Lent was



128. - TO SAINT LOUISE<sup>1</sup>

I was afraid that your difficulty had not been settled because Mademoiselle Delamare has been at your home for a long time. That is why I wrote the note I sent you, and not to dissuade you. Now, since your judgment has dealt with it in that way, we shall wait until tomorrow right after one o'clock. In the meantime, make your meditation tomorrow morning on the Birth of Our Lord and repeat the same thing at ten o'clock. Then, after dinner, meditate on the shepherds. Your last meditation will be on the Purification of the Blessed Virgin.

Adieu, Mademoiselle, remember our spiritual needs and that I am your servant.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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suppressed. From 1638 on, ordinands from outside the diocese who came to Paris for ordination were added to those of the diocese of Paris. The number of guests at Saint-Lazare varied between seventy and one hundred. Everyone was received free of charge. To be able to meet expenses, the Saint solicited the interest of the Ladies of Charity in this work. They gave generously, especially the wife of President de Herse and the Marquise de Maignelay. The Queen Mother also contributed bountiful sums. Everything went smoothly until 1645. Then donations were seldom seen and the house of Saint-Lazare had to bear almost all the expenses. It barely managed to do this, but the results of these retreats were so good that Saint Vincent never consented to interrupt them nor to reduce the number of ordinands. As retreat masters, he brought to Saint-Lazare the priests, or even the bishops, who were most outstanding for their virtues, talents, and zeal. Among them were Pavillon, Caulet, Perrochel (whom the Queen Mother came to hear), Sevin, and Bossuet. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. II, sects. I-V.)

**Letter 128.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>On the side reserved for the address, Saint Louise wrote: "On Monday morning, what Our Lord did on earth from His twelfth to His thirtieth year; at ten o'clock, the Baptism of Our Lord; at two, the conversion of Magdalen; and at five, the washing of the Apostles' feet. On Tuesday, the first meditation, the prayer in the garden; the second, the taking of Our Lord; the third, Our Lord before Caiphas and Herod; and the fourth, before Pilate."

129. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION<sup>1</sup>

[January 15, 1633]<sup>2</sup>

I have learned from various people of the blessings the goodness of God is so kindly lavishing on your mission in [Mortagne].<sup>3</sup> We were all greatly consoled by this. And because we recognize that this abundant grace comes from God, a grace which He keeps on giving only to the humble who realize that all the good done through them comes from God, I beg Him with all my heart to give you more and more the spirit of humility in all your duties. You must believe most assuredly that God will take this grace away from you as soon as you allow vain complacency to enter your mind, attributing to yourself what belongs to God alone.

Humble yourself greatly then, Monsieur, at the thought that Judas had received greater graces than you, that those graces had produced more results than yours, and that, in spite of that, he was lost. What would it profit, therefore, the greatest preacher in the world, endowed with the most eminent talents, to have made his preaching resound with applause throughout an entire province and even to have converted several thousand souls to God, if, in spite of all that, he were to lose his own soul!

I am not telling you this, Monsieur, because I have any particular reason to fear this vain complacency in you or M. . . .<sup>4</sup> who is working with you; but, so that, if the demon should attack you from that angle, as doubtless he will, you may very carefully and faithfully reject his suggestions and honor Our Lord's humility. These past few days, I have had as the subject of my talk the ordinary life Our Lord wished to lead on earth. I realized that He

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**Letter 129.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. I, sect. I, par. 2, p. 8.

<sup>1</sup>Probably Robert de Sergis or Lambert aux Couteaux. We know from other sources that both were working together near Bordeaux in 1633.

<sup>2</sup>The date and the name of the locality where the mission was being given were known by Collet (*op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 244), who quotes an excerpt from this letter.

<sup>3</sup>Probably Mortagne-sur-Gironde (Charente-Maritime).

<sup>4</sup>Lambert aux Couteaux or Robert de Sergis.

had so loved this ordinary and abject life of other men that, in order to adapt Himself to it, He had humbled Himself as much as He could, even to the point (O marvelous act which surpasses the whole capacity of human understanding!) that although He was the Uncreated Wisdom of the Eternal Father, He had wished, nevertheless, to preach His doctrine in a much simpler and more humble style than that of His Apostles. Pray, consider what His sermons were like and compare them with the epistles and sermons of Saint Peter, Saint Paul, and the other Apostles. It would seem that the style He used was that of a man of scant knowledge and that the style of His Apostles was that of men possessing far greater knowledge than He. What is even more astonishing is that He willed His sermons to have less effect than those of His Apostles. We see in the Gospels that He won over His Apostles and disciples almost one by one and did so with great labor and fatigue, while Saint Paul converted five thousand at his first sermon. This has certainly given me more enlightenment and knowledge, so it seems to me, about the great and marvelous humility of the Son of God than any other thought I have ever had on the subject.

Every day at Holy Mass we say these words: *In spiritu humilitatis*, etc. Now, a holy person told me one day, as he had learned from the blessed Bishop of Geneva,<sup>5</sup> that this spirit of humility which we ask of God in all our Masses consists mainly in remaining ever attentive and ready to humble ourselves incessantly on every occasion, both interiorly and exteriorly. But, Monsieur, who will give us this spirit of humility? Indeed, it will be Our Lord, if we ask Him for it and if we are faithful to His grace and careful to put it into practice. Let us do so then, I beg you, and to that end let us try to remember one another when we pronounce those same words at the holy altar. I hope for this from your charity.

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<sup>5</sup>Saint Francis de Sales.

130. - SAINT JANE FRANCES TO SAINT VINCENT

February 11 [1633]<sup>1</sup>

*Most honored and dear Father,*

*Alas! how good and paternal your heart is towards me and how I wish to believe for my consolation that it is most faithful in continuing its dear remembrance of me before the Divine Goodness. I have great need of this because of my age and difficulties. Now eternally praised be His Divine Goodness for the mercy He is pleased to lavish on souls by the holy and efficacious meekness of the spirit of His faithful and true servant, our most holy father!<sup>2</sup> For it is true, I admit to you, my dearest Father, that the spirit of our most worthy and true brother and father<sup>3</sup> has indeed been caught in his nets. I do not think that any other hand than that of this blessed man could have guided him so wisely, so gently, or so firmly as it did in this retreat. It was so exact that he is now completely separated from the world to the edification and consolation of everyone, and what is more, to the greatest glory of God and the consolation of his dear soul, and most certainly to the profit, honor and consolation of the Daughters of the Visitation who are infinitely obligated to him.*

*Our dear Sisters in the city are especially privileged with a great happiness by having him so near them. Oh! may God grant us the grace of corresponding faithfully to the sincere friendship and wholehearted charity that good gentleman has for us. I can assure you, dearest Father, that I love, honor, and revere him with all the breadth and strength of my soul.*

*I believe that you are now spending more time in Paris. Mon Dieu! take care of that dear and worthy person and do not allow him to live a life that is too severe or austere. I know he has great confidence in you. Moreover, I believe that our good Father Binet will now be. . . .<sup>4</sup> You see, I rather think that I am becoming hardened with age.*

*I have to finish in order to go to that blessed parlor. My dearest Father, may God fashion you more and more according to His own heart! Earnestly beseech His Goodness to be merciful to me so that, together*

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**Letter 130.** - Original autograph letter, Visitation of Chartres.

<sup>1</sup>Commander de Sillery had taken lodgings near the Visitation monastery in July 1632.

<sup>2</sup>Saint Francis de Sales, co-founder with Saint Jane Frances de Chantal of the Visitation Order.

<sup>3</sup>Commander de Sillery.

<sup>4</sup>Three lines of the original have been crossed out here and cannot be read.

*with our blessed father and all of you, our dear friends, I may praise Him eternally. Amen.*

*Most honored Father, I am in spirit your most humble and most obedient daughter and servant in Our Lord.*

### 131. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between January 1632 and February 1633]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

I learned just now, only an hour ago, about the misfortune that befell the young woman<sup>2</sup> whom your nurses of the poor were sheltering, what the doctor thinks about it, and how you went to visit her. I confess to you, Mademoiselle, that at first it touched my heart so deeply that, had it not been night, I would have set out at that very moment to come and see you. But the goodness of God towards those who give themselves to Him in the work of the Confraternity of Charity, no member of which has ever been stricken with the plague, makes me trust completely that you will suffer no harm. Would you believe, Mademoiselle, that not only did I visit the late Sub-prior of Saint-Lazare,<sup>3</sup> who died of the plague, but that I even felt his breath? And yet, neither I nor our men who nursed him to the end suffered any ill effects. No, Mademoiselle, have no fear. Our Lord wishes to make use of you for something that concerns His glory, and I think He will preserve you for that purpose. I shall celebrate Holy Mass for your

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**Letter 131.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXIII, end, p. 109. The first half of this letter, as far as the words "Would you believe," is to be found in the Saint Paul manuscript, p. 82; and since the text of this manuscript is more reliable than that of Abelly, we prefer to follow it for this section.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written after the Congregation of the Mission took possession of Saint-Lazare (January 8, 1632) and before the death of Marguerite Naseau (February 1633).

<sup>2</sup>This young woman, perhaps Marguerite Naseau, was stricken by the plague.

<sup>3</sup>Nicolas Maheut, whose name appears at the end of the contract signed on January 7, 1632, by the Priests of the Mission and the religious of Saint-Lazare.

intention. I would come to see you tomorrow were it not for an appointment I have with some doctors at the Madeleine with regard to business pertaining to the establishment of that house.<sup>4</sup>

### 132. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You can imagine, Mademoiselle, how my heart feels the sorrow of yours. Danger for you, there is none, by the grace of God. As for Marguerite,<sup>1</sup> it would be well to have the surgeon from the

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<sup>4</sup>In April 1618, Robert de Montry, a merchant in Paris, having heard that two young women of loose morals wanted to change their life, offered them shelter in a house belonging to him in the faubourg Saint-Germain. Other girls, tortured by remorse, followed the first two. Thus a small community was formed. The virtuous merchant took care of their needs until the Marquise de Maignelay, the sister of Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, agreed to take on the responsibility of the nascent work. She bought a house for them on the rue des Fontaines on July 16, 1620, maintained them during her lifetime, and left them in her will a legacy of 101,600 livres. The new establishment was authorized in May 1625 by Louis XIII, who endowed it with an annual income of 3,000 livres. It was approved by Urban VIII on December 15, 1631, and again confirmed by Royal Letters on November 16, 1634. Saint Vincent immediately grasped its importance and willingly agreed to work on the organization of the Institute. It can be said that he was its soul. The young women of loose life who retreated to the Madeleine retained their secular dress and took their place among the repentant girls. Several were there against their will by authority of the courts. After a few years of trial, the penitents put on a rather rough gray habit and entered the ranks of the repentant women. When there was no longer room to doubt the steadfastness of their conversion, they became nuns, took the habit of Saint Augustine, and pronounced solemn vows. Heading the community with titles of prioress, sub-prioress, treasurer, and portress, were four Visitation nuns chosen by the Archbishop of Paris. They handled all the income. They were changed from time to time to give them a rest, for theirs was an arduous task. The first Superior was Sister Marie-Anne Bollain who took office on July 20, 1629. (Cf. M. de Montry, *Relation véritable de la naissance et progrès du monastère de Sainte-Marie-Madeleine* [Paris: n.p., 1649]; Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. VII, pp. 328 ff.; Félibien, *op. cit.*, vol. V, p. 152; *Histoire chronologique des fondations de tout l'Ordre de la Visitation Sainte-Marie*, vol. I, pp. 264-272, Bibl. Maz., ms. 2430.)

**Letter 132.** - According to Coste, the original was at the house of the Priests of the Mission in Rongy (Belgium). The present location of the letter is unknown, but there is a photocopy in the Archives of the Mission, Paris.

<sup>1</sup>Because she had placed a plague-stricken woman in her own bed, Marguerite Naseau, then

Santé<sup>2</sup> visit her in case the doctor objects to going there.<sup>3</sup> Monsieur Cotti is easily frightened. Nevertheless, I think it would be wise to have that done as soon as possible. Monsieur Bourdoise<sup>4</sup> will give the order for it. Please see that he is asked. He knows what has to be done; he has been through this before.

Regarding the sick poor, I think you should discontinue that practice. It is to be feared that, if the money is distributed to them, the ladies may be content to do that hereafter. However, propose it to the Pastor and follow his orders.

If that poor girl is brought to Saint-Louis, you will have to give the other one some money and send her off.

As for you, I am wondering if it might not be advisable for you to go and relax in the country<sup>5</sup> for a little while and visit the Charities of Verneuil,<sup>6</sup> Pont,<sup>7</sup> Gournay,<sup>8</sup> and the others.<sup>9</sup> I have given Jourdain<sup>10</sup> the responsibility of coming to see you to tell you when the coach for Senlis is leaving, and of serving you in any way you may wish.

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employed at the confraternity of Saint-Nicolas, had contracted the terrible disease. She died of it in Saint-Louis Hospital.

<sup>2</sup>The hospital of the Santé, or Sainte-Anne Hospital, was built in 1607-1608 to receive the plague-stricken.

<sup>3</sup>Through fear of contagion.

<sup>4</sup>He did not live far from the house in which Marguerite Naseau was living.

<sup>5</sup>Saint Vincent wanted to send Saint Louise away because of the epidemic.

<sup>6</sup>In Oise.

<sup>7</sup>Pont-Sainte-Maxence (Oise).

<sup>8</sup>Gournay-sur-Aronde (Oise).

<sup>9</sup>Saint Louise also went to La Neufville-Roy and to Bulles (Oise). We still have her notes on the trip and the report of her visits which she addressed to Saint Vincent. In Verneuil, she stayed at a baker's house. The visiting of the sick left something to be desired. The confraternity possessed a few resources which they did not know how to use. The Marquise wanted to buy a house to lodge the sick, whereas several sisters preferred the purchase of a small plot of land "because of the number of deaths that sometimes occurred among the cattle." The sisters of Pont-Sainte-Maxence received only words of praise; Saint Louise had stayed at the Fleur-de-Lis. In Gournay she found the sisters a little more unrefined than elsewhere. The homeless sick were hospitalized with a woman who took care of them and received five sous a day for her trouble. In La Neufville-Roy and Bulles, the confraternities were better off; they had sheep, lambs, and money; but union among the sisters was far from perfect. In La Neufville-Roy, Saint Louise stayed at the inn. (Cf. *Ecrits spirituels*, A. 52 and A. 53.)

<sup>10</sup>Jean Jourdain.

The Archbishop has just asked me to come to see him. As soon as I can, I shall come and visit you. In the meantime, write me your opinion concerning what I am suggesting. If you need money, please take your traveling expenses out of the funds of your Charity. I beg you to do this and to remain quite cheerful.

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

M. Dehorgny will come to see you immediately after dinner.

Saint-Lazare, feast of Saint Matthias [1633]<sup>11</sup>

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

**133. - TO MICHEL ALIX, PASTOR OF SAINT-OUEN-L'AUMONE<sup>1</sup>**

March 1, 1633

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Is he to whom you are giving up your parish a good man? Will he be able to do in your parish the good that you are doing there?

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<sup>11</sup>As we know, the feast of Saint Matthias used to fall on February 24 or 25, depending on whether or not it was Leap Year. In order to determine the date, we have to know the year. Most of Saint Louise's biographers place the date of Marguerite Naseau's death in the year 1631. We cannot accept this date because the above letter was certainly written after January 8, 1632, the day Saint Vincent and his Missionaries took over Saint-Lazare, and even after the death of the Sub-prior of that house. (Cf. no. 131.) Supposing that the Sub-prior of Saint-Lazare died just a few days after the Priests of the Mission had taken possession of this establishment, no. 132 could belong to February 25, 1632. But given this hypothesis, no. 131 would have been written shortly after the death of the Sub-prior, which is very unlikely, for this death does not in any way seem to be an event of the preceding day. For these reasons, we prefer to believe that no. 132 is from February 24, 1633.

**Letter 133.** - Reg. I, f<sup>o</sup> 8 v<sup>o</sup>. The copyist notes that the writing of the original was that of Saint Vincent himself.

<sup>1</sup>In Val-d'Oise.



Will you be able to support yourself on four or five hundred livres? The first seems to me a large amount and the second, considerable. I have been in that place. It seems pleasant enough to me, but larger than yours. It would indeed be well for a pastor to have enough money to do good for the poor; I think there are enough of them to be found. In either case, you could set aside two hundred livres as an allowance for yourself. That being so and there not being any question of the first difficulty, you need to take some time to think about it, and even to go to the place to find out what the man is like and to see if you will like the locality. Whatever you do, I beg you not to hurry. It is a matter of great importance, and I assure you that I would be grieved if you made a decision without having asked God about it and without having consulted M. Duval or M. Coqueret,<sup>2</sup> or both. It is a question of knowing whether God wishes you to leave the spouse that you have taken or, to be more exact, that He Himself has given you.

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

VINCENT DEPAUL

I answered you immediately after receiving your letter.

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<sup>2</sup>Jean Coqueret, a Doctor of the Collège de Navarre, was the head of the Collège des Grassins and Superior of the Discalced Carmelites of France. He was a friend of Saint Francis de Sales, of André Duval, and of Saint Vincent, with whom he had given a mission in Villepreux in 1618. Born in Pontoise in 1592, he died in Marseilles, October 7, 1655. Saint Vincent consulted him before introducing vows into his Company and invited him to the conferences which were held at Saint-Lazare on the subject of Jansenism.

134. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

[Between 1626 and 1635]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I thank you most humbly for the rosaries and pictures you sent us. I beg God that they may be profitable to those to whom we shall distribute them, and that He may be your glory as He is the One Who gave you this devotion. As for the rest, are you being quite faithful to what you were directed concerning your manner of observing Lent, Mademoiselle? I beg you, if you are not, to become so and to let me know how you are feeling.

I most humbly recommend myself to your prayers and ask that you give the enclosed letter to Monsieur de Vincy.

I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

135. - MADAME GOUSSAULT TO SAINT VINCENT

*Reverend Father,*

*By the mercy of God, we have heard Holy Mass every day. As soon as we were in the carriage I would say: In viam pacis,<sup>1</sup> and everyone would answer me. Then I would remind them of the points of prayer, after which we said the Angelus.*

*Sometimes the first of our chats was about the thoughts we had had during our prayer, and then, in a somewhat more entertaining conversation, either about our distractions or our dreams, sometimes waging war*

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**Letter 134.** - Reg. I, f<sup>o</sup> 24. The copyist notes that the writing of the original was that of Saint Vincent.

<sup>1</sup>Years between which the name of Mademoiselle du Fay appeared in the correspondence of Saint Vincent. This letter was written during Lent.

**Letter 135.** - Autograph letter. Bibl. Sainte-Geneviève in Paris, ms. 3277, f<sup>o</sup> 283 ff.

<sup>1</sup>*In the way of peace:* opening words of a prayer recited at the beginning of a journey.

on those who had said something amiss. Afterwards, Grandnom<sup>2</sup> would read for about half an hour from the Pèlerin de Lorette; then two of our girls would sing the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus and the rest of us would repeat the same thing they had sung. When we were passing through a village, we would greet its Guardian Angel; and in the village where we were to stop, I would ask particular assistance from Our Lord.

In Etréchy,<sup>3</sup> we had our first dinner. I made my way to the church and asked if there was a Hôtel-Dieu. I came upon some little children with whom I chatted, and the thought came to me that they were God's children. I experienced a joy with them — while having them say their Our Father — which did away with the slight sadness I had had the morning of my departure. Every time my clock struck the hour, whether in the carriage or out of it, we would say a Hail Mary, placing ourselves again in the presence of God and asking for the accomplishment of His holy Will.

We spent our first night in Etampes. As we passed the church, I asked to leave the carriage and sent someone to find out where the Hôtel-Dieu was. It was very far away; nevertheless, I went there on foot with only my maid and my footman. I spoke to a young nun who turned out to be the Superior. I sat down to talk with her while my footman went to buy something to give to the sick. As I spoke to her of the necessity of a director, she stared at my face. I was dressed with a low collar and no farthingale,<sup>4</sup> like a servant. She said to me: "What sort of woman are you? Are you married? I have heard so much about a certain Mademoiselle Acarie,<sup>5</sup> but I think you are someone else." She then began to tell me how she had wanted to join the hospital nuns, that she had been chosen to be the Superior of six nuns there who are unreformed, but that after two years she had as yet accomplished nothing. I encouraged her a great deal. She told me that it would be necessary for her to come to

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<sup>2</sup>Intendant of Madame Goussault.

<sup>3</sup>A commune in the district of Etampes.

<sup>4</sup>A roll of material that women used to put under their skirt to make it stand out at the hip line.

<sup>5</sup>Born on February 1, 1566, in Paris, Barbe Avrillot married Pierre Acarie, Vicomte de Villemore, at the age of sixteen and became the mother of six children. After Henri IV exiled her husband, she took an active part in various religious enterprises, especially the introduction into France of the Discalced Carmelites (1604). Her three daughters entered Carmel. After the death of her husband, Madame Acarie entered the Discalced Carmelites as a lay sister, taking the name of Marie de l'Incarnation. She died in Pontoise on April 18, 1618, renowned for her virtues and miracles, which earned for her the honors of beatification in 1794. Her life, written in 1621 by André Duval, has tempted the pen of many other biographers up to the present time.

Paris. I offered her my house. I had a great desire to pray to God for her. At the inn, I heard that the hostess was greatly afflicted because of her son. I spent my time after supper conversing with her, then I gave the subject for prayer and the examen, as usual.

The next day, about dinner-time, in Angerville,<sup>6</sup> I could not find a Hôtel-Dieu. While dinner was being prepared, I went to the church. After dinner, I came down to find quite a number of poor people waiting for me, and also some children and adults who were acting surprised. I began by having them make the Sign of the Cross, which the majority did not know how to do, and I felt very sorry for them. They seemed to me to be a likable group of people.

I slept in Artenay<sup>7</sup> where I taught catechism in the church; I think I already told you that. Then I had dinner in Orléans where I arrived fasting at the Jesuit Fathers in order to receive Holy Communion, for it was Thursday. I marveled at the fact that everywhere I found everything just as I would wish, both for soul and body. Their Hôtel-Dieu is wealthy, from what I am told, but the sick are not better off for it. There are few nuns and they have servants under them on whom they rely too much. I had intended to stay there a little while for some business. I do not know why I disliked it so much. I was lodged with some Huguenots. I left everything there and went to spend the night in Cléry<sup>8</sup> where I visited and had Holy Mass said the next day at Notre-Dame. I had dinner in Saint-Dyé,<sup>9</sup> where I found the church very well looked after, and the poor and the children better instructed than anywhere else.

I went to spend the night in Blois. There I found many devotions, but the Hôtel-Dieu is not visited at all and is in disorder. I mentioned this to one of my cousins who is very devout. She told me that Father Lallemand, the Superior of the Jesuits,<sup>10</sup> had strongly encouraged the ladies to visit it, but that perhaps God had allowed me to come there to convince them that in Paris women of rank visit the Hôtel-Dieu, and now they will be prompted to go there.

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<sup>6</sup>A commune in the district of Etampes.

<sup>7</sup>Principal town of a canton in Loiret.

<sup>8</sup>In Loiret.

<sup>9</sup>In Loir-et-Cher.

<sup>10</sup>Jérôme Lallemand was born in Paris on April 27, 1593; entered the novitiate of the Jesuits, October 2, 1610; and died in Quebec, January 26, 1673. After teaching literature and philosophy and serving as rector in Blois and La Flèche, he became Superior of the Mission of Canada. He has left interesting accounts of that Mission which were published in Quebec in 1858.

*I did not stay there because there were measles in my uncle's house. I went to have dinner in Veuves<sup>11</sup> and to spend the night in Amboise where God granted me many graces. Their Hôtel-Dieu is poor. They take in all the transient cripples and orphans, but not the sick. There is a tradesman in that town who has put up funds for a schoolteacher. I questioned some of the poor in her presence and asked her to come and see me the next day. She did so and I was very edified by her. It was the first Sunday of the month. I went to confession and Communion at the Minim Fathers<sup>12</sup> and after dinner I did not fail to set out again in order to spend the night in Tours. There I saw the finest and most well-organized Hôtel-Dieu anywhere. The following day I went to Communion at Saint François-de-Paule where indulgences could be gained and there was a large gathering of people. In the afternoon, I left to spend the night in Langeais, and the following day I went to hear Holy Mass in Chouzé,<sup>13</sup> which belongs to this diocese here. The good priest who said the Mass could really, to my mind, stand having a mission. I even contemplated saying something to the Bishop of Angers<sup>14</sup> about it. The little children are hardly instructed at all!*

*From there I went on to Saumur where I remained that day, the whole of Wednesday. On Thursday I went to Communion again there. All my servants were very devout. As soon as we caught sight of the place, we sang the Te Deum.*

*I almost forgot to tell you how we spent our afternoons. Sometimes we recited our chaplet in two groups, and every day, the Litany of the Blessed Virgin; the others would repeat the same thing so that we might say them twice.*

*Our recreation lasted just as long as our prayers. Sometimes we played the game of not saying 'yes' or 'no'; whoever said it paid a Hail Mary to the one who was able to catch him. We sang Alleluia and other hymns, but did so in such a merry way that one of my farmers, who was on horseback, enjoyed watching us. I tried to teach Catherine how to read well and to enunciate properly. She would give answers and use language that made us laugh until we cried. In a word, Father, it is quite easy to serve God on these terms.*

*When I arrived here, two gentlemen came to meet me and kept me from going to the Hôtel-Dieu or to the church; and besides, it was early. I*

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<sup>11</sup>Commune in Loir-et-Cher.

<sup>12</sup>A religious order founded by Saint Francis of Paula around 1435.

<sup>13</sup>Commune in Indre-et-Loire.

<sup>14</sup>Claude de Rueil.

came straight here where I found a magnificent supper and so many people to welcome me that, in short, I was treated like a great lady.

The following day, I had time only to hear Mass. The gentlemen of the Court of Justice and all the leading citizens of the town came to visit me. Again the following day I had a hard time slipping away to visit the Hôtel-Dieu, which I found in fairly good order. There is a good woman, the wife of a townsman, who had made a vow to end her days in the service of the sick and she has been a great blessing for them; above all, she is very mindful of their salvation. Since then, I have been to visit the prisoners twice, bearing in mind what Our Lord said in the Gospel: "I was a prisoner." I gave them pictures and rosaries and obtained the release of some poor prisoners who aroused my compassion. What is unpleasant is that everything is known in the town and always exaggerated.

Sunday I went to Vespers in the church of a religious order where, contrary to my custom, I spent two hours before the Blessed Sacrament. While there, I thought of a way I could talk about catechism in the presence of the women in this house whom I thought in great need of it. I decided to go to the poor on the farms, took the ladies along, and questioned the children who are fairly well instructed. There is a good priest who takes great care of this. Father, this turned out so well that Mademoiselle Le Fèvre, who is married to a Councillor and has four children, told me on our return that she had enjoyed it very much and that she knew almost nothing about all that and added: "It is quite evident that you love the poor a great deal and that you are at your heart's content among them. You looked twice as beautiful while you were talking to them."

Father, it is admirable that God granted me the courage to speak in the presence of their priest and at least one hundred people. They listened and then, afterwards, paid me so many compliments. Even the good priest told me that he would consider himself most fortunate to be able to end his days near me, without wages or reward, just to listen to the words that would come from my lips. Those are his own words.

Well now, Father, I am writing to you, trusting that you will praise God and love Him for His infinite mercy. I cannot tell you the graces He granted me here and in Saumur, in spite of my very great unfaithfulness. I should be transported with love towards Him. Father, pray that He will bring down my pride in any way He sees fit. I am ready to lose everything and to leave everything, preferring humility to all consolations and possessions. The example of my Savior is very powerful; He left the bosom of His Father to come and practice it in poverty and self-abasement.

Well, let us get back to the catechism lessons. The fact is that, since

then, those good women come to pray with me whenever I give the subject for prayer, especially one who is a young girl. Now, I think she is deeply touched, I may say, won over. There is a good, devout woman who came to see me and told me that, if I were here for a year, I would convert the whole town. I assure you, she really made me laugh. [Three]<sup>15</sup> things please the people here: I do not play the role of the reformer, I laugh heartily, and I go to my parish church.

Recently, they urged me strongly to have my portrait painted. They have a man who does it to perfection — he is the one who painted the late Monsieur — and it is the custom here. There is no middle-class woman so unimportant that she is not painted. After their death, their portrait is placed in the church near their tomb. Well, I refused them and was sorry. I think I did so through a false humility of not wanting to appear so vain as to have my portrait painted, and there would have been more virtue in having it done out of condescension.

Recently I played backgammon for an hour and made up my mind to obey them in everything that is not sin, that is, until I receive an answer, because I shall do whatever you wish.

You know that I am, for the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Reverend Father, your most humble and obedient servant.

Angers, April 16, 1633

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent de Paul, Superior of the Priests of the Mission, at Saint-Lazare

### 136. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[April 1633]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you forever!

I am not writing you myself because I have had a bloodletting for my slight fever. I forgot to send you Monsieur Figeard, the

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<sup>15</sup>The text of the original reads: *Two*. Correction is necessary.

**Letter 136.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original signed letter.

<sup>1</sup>Reference to Madame Goussault's letter (probably no. 135) prompts us to assign this date.

doctor, a little while ago. I beg you to forgive me for this and also for not sending you the notes on the retreats. Allow me to tell you that you should not send your young women to the place you mention without finding out from the doctor if there is any danger.<sup>2</sup> I trust, nevertheless, that God in His goodness will not allow any harm to result from doing so, for you are aware of the special protection He affords the members of the Charity.

I received a letter from Madame Goussault about the blessings of her trip. When I get further news from her I shall share it with you.

Your letter of yesterday is not near me and I cannot remember its contents except what concerns the young man<sup>3</sup> you mentioned to me. With regard to him, let me say that I do not feel he should lay aside the cassock while he is uncertain about the choice of his present state in life. I think he should be left in his present situation until he has definitely made up his mind, and let his good mother not help him too much to come to a decision. Very likely the clerical state is best for him. If he is inclined that way, I think he should be strengthened in his determination.

As for the young woman who is making her retreat,<sup>4</sup> since she is ready for her general confession, you may use Busée<sup>5</sup> in French. After her general confession, give her the following subjects of prayer: on the first day, the Incarnation; second, the Nativity, which she will repeat for her third meditation; and fourth, the shepherds. On the second day, the first meditation will be the Circumcision; the second, the Magi; the third, the Purification; and the fourth, the life of Our Lord from his twelfth to His thirtieth year. The third day, the first meditation, the vocation of

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<sup>2</sup>The danger of contagion.

<sup>3</sup>This evidently refers to Michel Le Gras whom the Saint, out of delicacy, does not name.

<sup>4</sup>This is undoubtedly one of the young women employed in the service of the poor under Saint Louise or one who intended to embrace this state.

<sup>5</sup>Father Jean Busée of the Company of Jesus is the author of a highly esteemed book of meditations published in Douai in 1624 and entitled *Enchiridion piarum meditationum in omnes dominicas, sanctorum festa, Christi passionem et caetera*. It was translated into French by the Jesuit Fathers and in 1644 by Antoine Portail, who added several meditations.



the Apostles; the second, the first sermon of Our Lord; the third and fourth, the Beatitudes. The fourth day will be on judgment, concerning which you will have her consider the happiness of those who have taken pity on the poor, which meditation she will repeat twice; the third and fourth will be on some mystery of the Passion; and at the end you will have her draw up her rule of life, that is, her schedule for the day. The hours for meditation will be: the first upon rising, the second at ten o'clock, the third at two, and the fourth at five o'clock. She can read from Granada<sup>6</sup> and the lives of the saintly women who have excelled in charity.

That is all I can tell you for the present except that, tomorrow morning or the day after, I shall send you Monsieur Brunet. That will not prevent you from observing the order of these meditations. In the meantime, please let me know what the doctor thinks of the curate's illness, and I shall be, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

If the girl is accustomed to making only three meditations a day, please do not give her any more. I think I shall be unable to send you M. Brunet until the day after tomorrow in the afternoon.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Paris

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<sup>6</sup>Father Luis de Granada belonged to the Order of Saint Dominic. He was renowned for his holiness, sermons, and writings. He wrote several highly esteemed works replete with eloquence and piety: *The Sinners' Guide*, *Memorial of the Christian Life*, a catechism, some meditations, and the *Life of Dom Bartholomew of the Martyrs*. His sermons have been published. Gregory XIII used to say that Luis de Granada had wrought more miracles through his writings than if he had brought the dead back to life and given sight to the blind. This pious religious, together with Thomas a Kempis and Saint Francis de Sales, was one of the favorite authors of both Saint Louise (cf. Gobillon, *op. cit.*, p. 13) and Saint Vincent.

137. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The horse's falling on top of and under me was quite dangerous and the protection of Our Lord most extraordinary. It is God's goodness which dealt with me in this way, and the misuse of my life which caused Him to show me His rod. I beg you to help me obtain the grace to mend my ways for the future and to begin a new life. The fall left me with a slightly sprained ankle which, at present, gives me little pain.

I am supposed to be purged tomorrow, and the next day I shall be able to go out in the carriage to a place a league away. Wednesday I shall be able to go to Sainte-Marie<sup>1</sup> in the city. From there, if I can do so, I shall have the pleasure of coming to see you. In the meantime, regarding what you said about that doctor, I shall tell you that if you said anything that might lessen his reputation, you will do well to tell the good you know about him to the same person and to two or three others.

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, May 1 [1633]<sup>2</sup>

I am sending you a letter from Madame Goussault,<sup>3</sup> the President's wife. Please send it back to me tomorrow morning after you have read it.

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**Letter 137.** - According to Coste, the original autograph letter was in Shanghai, in the house of the Priests of the Mission. The present location of the letter is unknown, but there is a photocopy in the Archives of the Mission in Paris.

<sup>1</sup>First monastery of the Visitation nuns in Paris.

<sup>2</sup>The text says "1623" but this date is obviously incorrect because the Saint did not take possession of Saint-Lazare until 1632. The letter was written on a Sunday when Madame Goussault was out of town, circumstances which fit the date of May 1, 1633.

<sup>3</sup>This probably refers to Madame Goussault's letter of April 16, 1633 (no. 135), which Saint Vincent had promised to send to Saint Louise.

138. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[May 1633]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I do not believe that the Commander<sup>2</sup> has made a donation or a will in favor of anyone. I shall see the notary today and let you know the decision. If, however, you wish to plan your trip, you may as well; for in any case, if there were need, you could be here by the next day. I would really like you to be able to go by coach because of the very hot weather.

With regard to your employment,<sup>3</sup> my mind is not yet enlightened enough before God concerning a difficulty which prevents me from seeing whether it is the Will of His Divine Majesty. I beg you, Mademoiselle, to recommend this matter to Him during these days in which He communicates more abundantly the blessings of the Holy Spirit, rather, the Holy Spirit Himself. Let us persist, therefore, in our prayers, and may you remain quite cheerful.

I certainly hope that what you fear about your legs is not true, I who am your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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**Letter 138.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>It seems that this letter was written shortly before the institution of the Daughters of Charity (cf. note 3) and near or during the octave of Pentecost which, in 1633, fell on May 15.

<sup>2</sup>Although the word *Commander* refers everywhere else in the letters to the Commander de Sillery, who died September 26, 1640, it refers here to someone else. Commander de Sillery did indeed make many gifts by will and Saint Vincent was well aware of them. Perhaps the Commander (Commander of the Knights of St. John of Malta) referred to here is La Porte, the uncle of Cardinal Richelieu.

<sup>3</sup>Abelly quotes this sentence (*op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXIV, p. 113), relating it to the institution of the Daughters of Charity and this is, in fact, the most reasonable meaning.

139. - TO MICHEL ALIX, PASTOR OF SAINT-OUEN-L'AUMONE

Feast of Saint Barnabas,<sup>1</sup> 1633

Monsieur,

At last the little meeting for you pastors can be held Monday, at two o'clock in the afternoon, here in this house.<sup>2</sup> Do you think you can be present? I have given the group great reason to hope so. Expecting then the happiness of seeing you on that day, before dinner, and that you will recommend the matter to Our Lord in the meantime, I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

140. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1633 and 1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

I did not obey you last evening or the rest of the day with regard to that little remedy, certainly not through lack of respect or condescension for your charitable advice but because of some difficulty of my own. I want to be sure that you will excuse me for this, as also for not having the pleasure of seeing you before I

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**Letter 139.** - Reg. 1, f<sup>o</sup> 9. The copyist notes that the original was in Saint Vincent's own handwriting.

<sup>1</sup>June 11.

<sup>2</sup>The meeting concerned the organization of the ecclesiastical conferences which became so famous in such a short time and attracted to Saint-Lazare the most eminent priests, known both for their holiness and their learning. Abelly has recounted the assembly mentioned here (*op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. III, sect. 1, pp. 246 ff.).

**Letter 140.** - The original autograph letter is the property of the international office of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society in Paris, 5 rue du Pré-aux-Clercs.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written after the institution of the Tuesday Conferences and before the transfer of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity to La Chapelle.

return to Saint-Lazare because of a pastors' meeting we are having there today. Be assured, Mademoiselle, that I shall make it a point to use the remedies you suggest at Saint-Lazare and that I shall return here<sup>2</sup> afterwards, God willing. Then we shall give you more spiritual direction than I have been able to do at this time.

Meanwhile, please see to it that you take care of yourself while you have that little cold, and that you do not do so much another time. Trusting that you will heed this advice, I say adieu once again and I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

141. - TO AN ECCLESIASTIC

[July 9, 1633]<sup>1</sup>

May God be glorified, Monsieur, for all the graces and blessings He is bestowing on your mission! Does it not seem to you that so many workers who remain idle could be well employed in the great harvest in which you are now working, and that those who are aware of the need the Master of the harvest has for workers will be guilty of the blood of His Son which they are allowing to remain fruitless for want of application? Oh, how well the idea you so kindly shared with me some days past was received by the ecclesiastics, by all those we mentioned in general and by each one in particular! We saw them together about two weeks ago<sup>2</sup> and, in a uniformity of spirit which appears entirely of God, they resolved to do what you proposed. I began my speech with the

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<sup>2</sup>To the Collège des Bons-Enfants.

**Letter 141.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. II, sect. I, p. 248.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written the day of the pastors' second meeting, which Abelly places on this date.

<sup>2</sup>June 13.

words you expressed to me, without mentioning your name, except when it was necessary to include you as one of them and to reserve your place in their group. They are to meet again today.<sup>3</sup> O Monsieur, what reason there is to hope for much good from this group! You are its promoter and it is to your interest that it succeed for the glory of God. Please pray to Him for that intention, Monsieur, and for me in particular.

142. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME<sup>1</sup>

[July 1633]<sup>2</sup>

You should know something that I think I have not yet written to you: it has pleased the goodness of God to grant a very special and unimaginable blessing to our ordinands' retreat. It is such that all those who have made the retreat, or almost all, are leading lives such as ought to be led by good and perfect ecclesiastics. There are even a number of them, outstanding by reason of their birth or the other qualities which God has granted them, who are living as regular a life in their own homes as we do here, and who are as interior and even more so than many among us, were it myself alone. They live by a schedule, make mental prayer, celebrate Holy Mass, and make their examens<sup>3</sup> every day as we do.

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<sup>3</sup>Abelly writes: "These ecclesiastics then met again the following ninth of July and determined the order to be observed in their conferences. They elected some officers to maintain this order and fixed Tuesday of each week for the meeting. . . . M. Vincent gave them 'the ecclesiastical spirit' as the topic of their first conference, which was held on the sixteenth of the same month." More than 250 ecclesiastics attended the Tuesday Conferences during Saint Vincent's lifetime. Twenty-two of these became bishops, Bossuet among others.

**Letter 142.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. II, sect. V, beginning, p. 233.

<sup>1</sup>Abelly merely states that the letter was addressed to a Priest of the Mission in Rome. This priest could only be M. du Coudray.

<sup>2</sup>This letter was written shortly after the sixteenth of July, the date of the first ecclesiastical conference.

<sup>3</sup>In order to have a clearer knowledge of one's defects, to make expiation for them, and to acquire a greater purity of soul, Saint Vincent advised those whom he directed to make two

They work hard visiting the hospitals and the prisons, where they teach catechism, preach, and hear confessions, as they also do in the collèges, with very special blessings from God. Among others, there are twelve to fifteen in Paris who live this way and who are persons of rank. The public is becoming aware of this.<sup>4</sup>

Now, a few days ago, one of them, speaking about the way of life led by those who had made the ordinands' retreat with him, put forward an idea that he had had of binding them together by way of meetings or by forming a society. This has been done to the great satisfaction of all the others. The goal of this assembly is to attend to their own perfection; to take the means of seeing that God be not offended, but that He be known and served in their households; and to procure His glory among ecclesiastics and the poor. All this is to take place under the direction of someone from here, where they are to meet once a week. And because God has blessed the retreats which a number of pastors in this diocese have made here, these gentlemen were eager to do the same thing and have in fact begun. Now, there is reason to hope for much good from all this, if it pleases Our Lord to bless His work, which I recommend particularly to your prayers.

#### 143. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

[Between 1626 and 1635]<sup>1</sup>

. . . their hardness of heart. O Mademoiselle, how that sort of sin captivates hearts in a tyrannical way and how fortunate are

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examinations of conscience each day; the particular examen on some virtue to be acquired or some vice to be rooted out; the general examen on each of the actions of the day. (Cf. Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission, chap. X, par. 9.)

<sup>4</sup>They had just given a mission to the workers who were building the church of the Visitation. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. II, sect. I, p. 247.)

**Letter 143.** - Reg. 1, f<sup>o</sup> 4 v<sup>o</sup>. The beginning of the letter has been lost. The copyist notes that the original was in Saint Vincent's own handwriting.

<sup>1</sup>Years between which the name of Mademoiselle du Fay appeared in the correspondence of Saint Vincent.

those who are delivered from it! After all, you acted in that matter according to what was in you and before God you will have the reward as if you were entirely the cause of the salvation of those souls; for God does not consider the outcome of the good work undertaken but the charity that accompanied it. May the Divine Goodness be pleased to forgive me the insufficiency of my own, I, who am, in His love, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

144. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1632 and 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

How are you, Mademoiselle? Could you join us on the trip to Pontoise? If so, you would have to be ready by two o'clock today, Sunday, and you could go to confession tomorrow morning.

Good day, Mademoiselle. Please write what you have decided to Madame Goussault. I wish you a good day once again and am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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**Letter 144.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The date of Saint Vincent's earliest contacts with Madame Goussault and the date of her death.



145. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

1633

O Monsieur, how fortunate we are to honor the poor family of Our Lord by the poverty and lowliness of our own! I was saying with consolation, a few days ago when I was preaching in a community, that I am the son of a poor farmer; and in another gathering, that I have looked after pigs. Would you believe, Monsieur, that I am fearful of feeling vain satisfaction from this because of the pain nature suffers from it? It is true that the devil is quite clever and cunning, but surely, even more so than he, is the man who considers himself honored by the lowly condition of the Child of Bethlehem and His holy parents.

146. - TO ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC<sup>1</sup>

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have in no way doubted your charity towards us, Monsieur,

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**Letter 145.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. III, chap. XIX, p. 289.

**Letter 146.** - Arch. of the Chapter of Cahors, file I, no. 25, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Alain de Solminihac was born in the Château of Belet in Périgord on November 25, 1593. He was only twenty-two years of age when one of his uncles resigned the Abbey of Chancelade (Dordogne) in his favor. This abbey depended on the Order of Canons Regular of Saint Augustine. He replaced the old buildings with new constructions and had discipline restored to the abbey. On January 21, 1630, Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld sent him full powers to visit the houses belonging to the Canons of Saint Augustine in the dioceses of Périgueux, Limoges, Saintes, Angoulême, and Maillezais. Alain de Solminihac was sought after in many places to establish reform. Appointed to the bishopric of Cahors on June 17, 1636, he devoted himself body and soul to the church of which he was the shepherd. He procured for his people the benefit of missions, visited the parishes of his diocese regularly, created a seminary for the formation of his clergy, and entrusted its direction to the sons of Saint Vincent. At the time of his death, December 21, 1659, the diocese of Cahors was completely renewed. Since God had manifested the sanctity of Alain by several miracles, his cause was introduced in Rome at the request of the clergy of France. (Cf. Léonard Chastenet, *La vie de Mgr. Alain de Solminihac* [new ed., Saint-Brieuc: Prud'homme, 1817]; Abel de Valon, *Histoire d'Alain de Solminihac, évêque de Cahors* [Cahors: Delsaud, 1900].) On October 4, 1981, Pope John Paul II beatified him.

but I am certainly dissatisfied with myself. That utterly divine virtue appears quite different in the use you make of it and in mine. The manner in which you have had those young ecclesiastics<sup>2</sup> received and the way you treat them make me see as it were a diamond of God's goodness in your charity and reveal to me my own clumsy, insipid way of welcoming and treating the servants of God. Oh! to be sure, I am determined to mend my ways, if Our Lord is pleased to grant me this grace through the prayers which I am begging you to say for me.

Moreover, they tell me of the refreshment not only corporal, but also spiritual, which you are giving them. It is with such lofty sentiments that they are receiving it and conveying it to me that I really intend to give our Company a good conference about it. By all means, Monsieur, please continue, in the name of Our Lord, to do them so much good.

On the whole, Monsieur Lambert<sup>3</sup> is very good. The other

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<sup>2</sup>Lambert aux Couteaux and Robert de Sergis. By a decree of January 20, 1632, Saint Vincent had committed himself to leave in perpetuity, within the jurisdiction of the Parlements of Toulouse, Bordeaux, or Provence, two Missionaries and a servant to give missions there gratuitously. In exchange, he received from Nicolas Vivien, the King's Councillor, the sum of ten thousand livres, which he needed to cover the expenses incurred by the preparation of the Priory of Saint-Lazare. (Arch. nat. MM 538, f<sup>o</sup> 292 v<sup>o</sup>.)

<sup>3</sup>Lambert aux Couteaux, born in Fossemanant (Somme) in 1606, had been a member of the Congregation of the Mission since August 1629. He was then preaching in the south of France with Robert de Sergis and was taking advantage of a few days of rest to recollect himself at the residence of the Abbot of Chancelade, where Saint Vincent had told him to go. He founded the house of Toul in 1635 and remained there as Superior until 1637. In January 1638, he began the establishment in Richelieu (Indre-et-Loire), where he was Pastor and Superior for four years. The General Assembly of 1642 named him Assistant to the Superior General. In 1650 and 1651 he was again in Richelieu. For a brief period he was Superior at the Bons-Enfants (1646-1649), then at Saint-Charles (1650). The Saint had such confidence in him that he had him make the visitation of Saint-Lazare. He sent him to render the same service to the Missionaries of La Rose and Toul, as well as to the Sisters of Angers and Nantes. Urged by the Propaganda in 1647 to designate someone as coadjutor of Babylon, Saint Vincent could think of no one more worthy than Lambert aux Couteaux. In his response to Bishop Ingoli he expressed himself as follows: "I must admit, Your Excellency, that the loss of this man is like having me tear out one of my eyes or cut off one of my arms." The plan did not materialize. It was again upon him that the Saint cast his eyes to establish the Congregation in Poland where the Queen was calling for the Missionaries. Lambert aux Couteaux went there in 1651. Everything had to be organized in that war-torn and plague-stricken country. His efforts were blessed by God but short-lived; he died January 31, 1653, a victim of his dedication to the plague-stricken. (Cf. *Notices*, 1st series, vol. II, pp. 1-28.)

man<sup>4</sup> is not bad, thank God, but he has a slight disinclination, not to say aversion, towards practices which resemble religion, and he does not have enough submission and humility with regard to matters which offend his intelligence. In the Rouen seminary<sup>5</sup> he acquired some sort of spirit of reserve and of opposition to private direction. As a result, when he finds himself in conversation dealing with those matters, he cannot help showing some of that in his words, which have even done harm to two people here. In spite of this, he has always been perfectly obedient to all the superiors I have sent to him in the country and to me, without any act of disobedience whatever. I thought, Monsieur, that I ought to tell you this because I hope this letter will be delivered to you during the time I think you will have him for retreat.

Now let us talk about the Pébrac affair.<sup>6</sup> I went to see the Archbishop of Arles purposely and gave him the letter you had written to him. I also gave Monsieur Fontaine his. Then we talked about the Pébrac affair. Here is the Archbishop's advice: he feels that you must first satisfy the Archbishop of Bordeaux,<sup>7</sup> and then Abbé Olier.<sup>8</sup> But if the Archbishop has not gotten Sablon-

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<sup>4</sup>This can only be Robert de Sergis for, with the possible exception of Jacques Mouton who had recently been accepted at Saint-Lazare and who was perhaps still a simple cleric, he was the only member of the Congregation of the Mission from the diocese of Rouen.

<sup>5</sup>On the Rouen seminary, see in *Mémoires de la Société des antiquaires de Normandie*, vol. XXVI, Paris, 1867, pp. 404 ff., the study of Ch. R. de Beaurepaire entitled "Recherches sur les établissements d'instruction publique dans l'ancien diocèse de Rouen."

<sup>6</sup>Jean-Jacques Olier, the commendatory Abbot of the Canons Regular of Pébrac in the Saint-Flour diocese, had asked the Abbot of Chancelade, through the intermediary of Saint Vincent, to kindly establish reform in that abbey. Alain would have accepted willingly, but a letter from the Archbishop of Bordeaux was requesting the same service for the Abbey of Sablonceaux (Charente-Maritime). A choice had to be made. Uncertain as to what to do, Alain had asked Saint Vincent's advice, requesting him to submit the matter to the Archbishop of Arles, Jean Jaubert de Barrault (1630-1643), an enlightened prelate in whom he had great confidence. It is to this letter that the Saint is replying.

<sup>7</sup>Henri d'Escoubleau de Sourdis, Archbishop of Bordeaux (1629-1645).

<sup>8</sup>Jean-Jacques Olier, the celebrated founder of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice whom Saint Vincent calls "a man given over to the grace of God and completely apostolic," was one of the principal restorers of ecclesiastical discipline in the seventeenth century. He was born in Paris, September 20, 1608. After a few hesitations, which Saint Vincent succeeded in dissipating, he entered holy orders and was ordained a priest on May 21, 1633. The first years of his priestly

ceaux<sup>9</sup> settled, and is not doing so at present, he thinks you would do well to arrange for Pébrac. It remains then to find out what the Archbishop of Bordeaux intends to do. If he is not considering some action at the present time, you should negotiate with good Abbé Olier. There are eighteen religious in that monastery. He is now offering one thousand francs, from which he will be exempted in proportion as the religious die. It will be up to you, Monsieur, to inform us of what you have worked out with the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who is on his way to your districts, and to let us know your pleasure. As for Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld,<sup>10</sup> the Archbishop of Arles thought it best not to mention the matter to him yet.<sup>11</sup>

career were consecrated to the work of missions. He participated in the labors of the priests of Saint-Lazare whom he edified by his zeal and humility. For reasons still unexplained, perhaps, as has been said, because of a divergence of views on the question of whether he should accept the episcopal state, Olier passed from the direction of Saint Vincent, who had been his confessor for three years (1632-1635), to that of Father de Condren. This was not a desertion — far from it. In 1649 he wrote: "For extraordinary affairs, we do not fail to see Monsieur Vincent, and for ordinary matters, all our brothers assembled." He did not begin the Seminary of Vaugirard or accept the pastorate of Saint-Sulpice until he had consulted the Saint. "M. Vincent is our father," he often used to say to the ecclesiastics in his seminary. Jean-Jacques Olier died April 2, 1657, assisted by his holy friend. The latter consoled the priests of Saint-Sulpice in their affliction, and it is believed that we still have a fragment of his address to them on that occasion. (Cf. Etienne-Michel Faillon, *Vie de M. Olier, fondateur du séminaire de Saint-Sulpice* [4th ed., 3 vols., Paris: Poussielgue, 1873]; Frédéric Monier, *Vie de Jean-Jacques Olier, curé de la paroisse et fondateur du séminaire de Saint-Sulpice* [Paris: Poussielgue, 1914].) For Saint Vincent's address, mentioned above, see vol. XIII, no. 51.

<sup>9</sup>Henri de Sourdis was commendatory Abbot of the abbey situated in that locality. Alain de Solminihac sent two religious there to establish reform.

<sup>10</sup>François de la Rochefoucauld was born in Paris, December 8, 1558. He became Bishop of Clermont, October 6, 1585, Cardinal in 1607, Bishop of Senlis in 1611, and commendatory Abbot of Sainte-Geneviève in Paris in 1613. He resigned his bishopric in 1622 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, he obtained from Pope Gregory XV on the eighth of April special powers and the title of Apostolic Commissary. Supported by such men as Saint Vincent, Father Tarisse, and Father Charles Faure, he caused order and discipline to flourish once again in the monasteries. The Cardinal died February 14, 1645, having at his side Saint Vincent, who prepared him to appear before God. His body was buried at Sainte-Geneviève and 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]; Lallemand et Chartonnet, *La vie du Révérend Père Charles Faure, abbé de Sainte-Geneviève de Paris* [Paris: J. Anisson, 1698].)

<sup>11</sup>The Abbot of Chancelade was obliged to postpone the reform of the Abbey of Pébrac.

The Abbot of Foix<sup>12</sup> is also here with us. He is a very fine young man who visits us often and with confidence. His abbey belongs to your Order. The revenue of the monks, including the offices and benefices belonging to them, is worth ten thousand livres. He wants to have reform at any price and already began to talk about it here, but since people told him about Chancelade, its nearness makes him desire that service from there. You know that Foix is near Toulouse, and God knows that you are one of the people in the world in whom Our Lord has given me the most confidence and that I am, in His love and in that of His holy Mother, Monsieur, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, August 23, 1633

*Addressed:* The Abbot of Chancelade

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Olier renewed his request June 1, 1634, this time with greater success. Alain de Solminihac came to Pèbrac, and an agreement was concluded among them: himself, Olier, and the religious of the abbey. Everything seemed to be settled when some unforeseen difficulties upset the arrangements made and put the abbey back into its former state.

<sup>12</sup>François-Etienne de Caulet, born in Toulouse, May 19, 1610, was endowed with the Abbey of Saint-Volusien in Foix in 1627. He became attached to Jean-Jacques Olier and accompanied him on his missions in Auvergne, in the diocese of Chartres, and in other places in the kingdom. He supported him in his parochial ministry and, together with him and M. du Ferrier, founded the Seminary of Vaugirard. Saint Vincent, who knew the Abbot of Saint-Volusien, thought that he would do well at the head of a diocese. Thanks to him, François de Caulet was consecrated Bishop of Pamiers, March 5, 1645. In 1638 he testified against the Abbé de Saint-Cyran. As Bishop, he continued to combat Jansenism for a long time, forbade in his diocese the reading of books by adherents of the movement, and made every effort to bring back those who had strayed from the path of truth. His association with Nicolas Pavillon, Bishop of Alet, succeeded in winning him over to other ideas. The Bishop of Pamiers died August 7, 1680, without having made the act of submission to the Church. (Cf. Jérôme Besoigne, *Vies des quatre évêques engagés dans la cause de Port-Royal* [2 vols., Cologne: n. p., 1756]; Georges Doublet, *Un prélat janséniste, F. de Caulet, réformateur des chapitres de Foix et de Pamiers* [Paris: A. Picard, 1895].) M. Gazier, an authority on Jansenism, had in his library, so rich in books and rare manuscripts, a manuscript entitled *Histoire abrégée de la vie de M. François de Caulet, évêque de Pamiers*, by Father Gabaret.

147. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around September 2, 1633]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

Marie has replied to me quite earnestly, lovingly, and humbly that she is ready to do what you wish and in the way you wish. She is only sorry that she does not have enough common sense, strength, or humility to be of use for it; but, if you tell her what she has to do, she will follow your instructions completely. Oh, what a good girl she seems to be! I certainly think, Mademoiselle, that Our Lord has given her to you Himself so that He might make use of her through you.

What shall I say to you about the rest of your letter except that I praise God for having consoled you on the feast of Saint Lazarus at the Bons-Enfants, and that what I think He is asking of you is that you honor His holy Providence in your conduct by not hurrying or bustling about? I shall try to come and hear about the thoughts Our Lord has given you with regard to this matter. But as for Chartres,<sup>2</sup> I do not see any way of going there because right now we are in the midst of our most important affairs.

As for what you say, that you need some reproof to keep you from falling back, we shall give it, please God.

Business has caused me to detain Marie until now. Send her to visit those virtuous religious of the Hôtel-Dieu every day if you can give her that time, but please have her do so in such a way that the good young woman does not get tired of it.

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**Letter 147.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 79.

<sup>1</sup>The final sentence, if it has not been interpolated, obliges us to place this letter before nos. 161 and 163, which belong to the early months of 1634. It could belong to 1632, but we believe it to be rather from 1633. Be that as it may, it was surely written very shortly after the second of September, the feast of Saint Lazarus.

<sup>2</sup>Saint Vincent and Saint Louise sometimes went to pray at Notre-Dame de Chartres. Perhaps, shortly before the Company of the Daughters of Charity was to come into being, the Founders wanted to place their project under Mary's protection.

Madame Forest<sup>3</sup> would like very much to get acquainted with you; she is a good and virtuous lady. I am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

148. - TO SAINT LOUISE

To be sure, Mademoiselle, it is well to take notice of the more ardent affections that agitate your heart so that you can do your best to regulate them by the standard of the holy and ever-adorable Will of God. And you have done well, in this doubt, to seek enlightenment so that you may do what Our Lord is asking of you, without fear of burdening me by seeking it. Understand once and for all, Mademoiselle, that a person whom God in His plan has destined to assist someone else is no more overburdened by the advice that the other requests than a father is by his own child.

As for that good woman, Madame Sarvoisy, I think it would be advisable to seek information about her from those good gentlemen before coming to the point of acting. However, we are not that far yet because we have suggested that Sainte-Marie<sup>1</sup> test her to see if she has a vocation for that holy house. When she has been tested and rejected, then we shall do as you are suggesting.

Rest assured, Mademoiselle, of the heart of one who is, in the heart of Our Lord and in His love, your most humble servant. Permit me to add to this the recommendation of holy indifference, although nature grumbles against it. I tell you that everything is to be feared until we succeed in this, since our inclinations are so wicked that they seek themselves in all things. Courage! May Our

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<sup>3</sup>Alexandre-Antoine de Francelles, the Pastor of Saint-Jean-en-Grève in Paris and one of the witnesses at the process of beatification of Saint Vincent, presented to the tribunal twenty-seven letters from the Saint to Madame Forest, whom he directed. These letters have all been lost.

**Letter 148.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Visitation nuns.

Lord be in our hearts and our hearts in His, so that they may be three in one and one in three and that we may wish only what He wills.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

149. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1632 and 1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have just now finished reading your note in haste; it worries me a little because of your slight fever. I beg you to send for M. Le Sourd.<sup>2</sup> You probably began to purge yourself too much; but still I hope it is nothing. Meanwhile, let me tell you that Madame Goussault wishes that good young woman from Montdidier to be a member of the Charity, so please regard her as such.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. D.

Ten o'clock

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, rue de Versailles, opposite the Epée-Royale<sup>3</sup>

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**Letter 149.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Date of the transfer of the Daughters of Charity to La Chapelle.

<sup>2</sup>A doctor.

<sup>3</sup>This little street, parallel to the rue d'Arras, connected the rue Saint-Victor with the rue Traversière or Traversine. The house opposite the shop sign of l'Epée-Royale was in the middle of the rue de Versailles. At present, its location seems to correspond to 21 rue Monge. It was probably there on November 29, 1633, that the Company of the Daughters of Charity came into being.



150. - TO MICHEL ALIX, PASTOR OF SAINT-OUEN-L'AUMONE

September 16, 1633

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The blessing of peace and reconciliation in lawsuits is something so great and pleasing to God that He says to each one of us: *Inquire pacem et persequere eam.*<sup>1</sup> He not only tells us to accept this divine peace when it is offered to us, but to seek it out and run after it. Now, I praise God that you want to do this by leaving all your business matters to go and settle the dispute you are having in your district. But I think it is important for the glory of God that you put off your trip until the Monday after the [first] Sunday of the month.

You have your two curates here who are doing well, thank God, and are edifying us very much. The retreat they are making was not only necessary for them in a certain sense, but useful as well. You could not recall them in less than a week without prejudice to the Church in general, to your own parish in particular, and to them.

Moreover, neither could you miss the upcoming pastors' meeting, which is of very great importance and which absolutely requires your presence, without prejudice to the good of the Church in general and to as many individual parishes as there are pastors. That is why, Monsieur, I think you would be wise to write, either to the person with whom you have to deal or to someone else who is acting as an intermediary to adjust the differences between you, that you cannot leave any earlier for the two above-mentioned reasons, but that you will not fail to do so the Thursday after the first Sunday of the month in order to go the place required so as to

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**Letter 150.** - Reg. 1, f<sup>o</sup> 14. The copyist notes that the original was in Saint Vincent's own handwriting.

<sup>1</sup>*Search for peace and seek to attain it.* Ps. 34:15. "Seek peace and follow after it." (NAB)

proceed to the settlement of this matter in the spirit of peace Our Lord has given you.

What I am saying to you, nevertheless, Monsieur, is said with all the submission and deference I owe you and wish to render you all my life in Our Lord. It is said also with the confidence I have that there is no one in the world so difficult, if he is somewhat predisposed to reconciliation, who will not listen to your reasons and wait until that time — during which nothing is done, even at law. Moreover, I am hoping, Monsieur, that *si quaerimus sic primo regnum Dei, omnia adjicientur nobis in bonum.*<sup>2</sup>

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

V. D. P.

#### 151. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[August or September,<sup>1</sup> around 1633<sup>2</sup>]

Madame,<sup>3</sup>

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have just received your letter which worried me a little because of your relapse. I greatly fear that you risked going out too soon. Oh, well! blessed be God! I beg you, Mademoiselle, in the name of Our Lord, to do all in your power to take care of yourself,

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<sup>2</sup>If we seek first the kingdom of God in this manner, all things will be added to us for our good. Mt. 6:33. "Seek first his kingship over you, and all things will be given to you besides." (NAB)

**Letter 151.** - The original autograph letter is at the house of the Priests of the Mission at San Silvestro in Rome.

<sup>1</sup>The time of year when Saint Vincent usually made his annual retreat.

<sup>2</sup>This letter appears to have been written shortly before the establishment of the Daughters of Charity.

<sup>3</sup>This word is obviously the result of a distraction.

no longer as a private individual but as a person upon whose health a number of others are dependent.

Today is the eighth day of our little retreat; I hope to continue to the tenth with the help of God.

I think your good angel did what you told me in the letter you wrote me. Four or five days ago, he communicated with mine concerning the Charity of your young women. It is true; he prompted me to recall it often and I gave that good work serious thought. We shall talk about it, God willing, on Friday or Saturday, if you do not write to me sooner.

As for that good young woman from Beauvais, please do not send her on Thursday. Would she be suitable for teaching the little girls in the villages? That is what you will mainly need. Our Lord, in the footsteps of Whose Providence you are walking, will Himself provide someone. You must leave that worry to Him and remain in peace.

Have you seen a doctor? Would you like me to send you ours? We are at your service.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Tuesday, at two o'clock

#### 152. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[September or October 1633]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

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**Letter 152.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written during the grape-harvesting season and seems to be near the date

They had indeed told me that you would not do anything just now in the region of Villeneuve<sup>2</sup> during the grape-harvesting season. Oh, well! Go there at the appointed time, please. If, meanwhile, you would like to go to the Bois de Vincennes, there is great need for it; but then, those good women will likewise be unable to come. I think it would be well for you to postpone your visit a little while longer.

We must surely meet before making a firm decision about the girls, and it can only be towards the end of the week. In the meantime, please send them away for the next twelve to fifteen days, at which time you can notify them through the student. It will be good, meanwhile, to have them understand that they must remain in a spirit of indifference. Indeed! They must be trained in the knowledge of solid virtues before we can make use of them.

The pen is being removed from my hand. There is a good priest here asking for me. Therefore, I must conclude with a thank you for the concern you have for my health, assuring you that I shall take care of it as you desire.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

You do not mention the state of your own health, which I heard is a little worse. Please take care of it.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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(November 29, 1633) when Saint Louise housed a certain number of young women at her home in Saint-Nicolas "to form them to the knowledge of solid virtues" before making use of their services.

<sup>2</sup>Villeneuve-Saint-Georges.

153. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1633]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

Here is that good young woman whom Madame Goussault, the President's wife, thought we should send to you.<sup>2</sup> Please be so kind as to have someone see her so that she can be instructed. Monsieur Compaing<sup>3</sup> can send you some priest for that purpose, or else, if necessary, Monsieur Véron<sup>4</sup> will be happy to take the trouble to talk to her. I hope she will be a capable young woman and conduct herself well.

The President's wife bids you good day and [I] am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

154. - TO THE LIEUTENANT DE GANNES<sup>1</sup>

December 19, 1633

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The time is at hand when we are obliged to come and work on your estates in Picardy.<sup>2</sup> Father de Gondî allowed us to put it off

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**Letter 153.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 73.

<sup>1</sup>This letter appears to precede the establishment of the Daughters of Charity.

<sup>2</sup>To teach school.

<sup>3</sup>A curate at Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.

<sup>4</sup>Perhaps François Véron, a renowned controversialist born in Paris around 1575. He was a member of the Company of Jesus from 1595 to 1620 and a great adversary of the Protestants and Jansenists. He died in Charenton where he was Pastor on December 6, 1649. (Cf. Pierre Féret, *Un curé de Charenton au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* [Paris: J. Gervais, 1881].)

**Letter 154.** - Reg. 1, f<sup>o</sup> 1 v<sup>o</sup>. The copyist notes that the original was in Saint Vincent's own handwriting.

<sup>1</sup>It was after the general confession of a peasant from Gannes (Oise) that Saint Vincent and Madame de Gondî first thought of establishing the work of the missions.

<sup>2</sup>The contract drawn up April 17, 1625, between Saint Vincent and the De Gondis stipulates

until now. Therefore, there are six priests of our Little Company coming to work there. I commend them to you and entreat you to furnish them with money if they need any. I shall reimburse you for it upon receiving a letter of demand, giving it to whomsoever you send.

I returned the night before last from Villepreux where I had gone to see the General's wife<sup>3</sup> who, for her age, is one of the most accomplished persons I have ever seen. I hope she will follow the example of our good deceased Madame.

I have been assured that the Duc de Chaulnes<sup>4</sup> has promised the General<sup>5</sup> that he will be firm in keeping his estates free of gendarmes. The new title of Duc de Retz which he will have will not harm matters.

I saw Martin in Villepreux and he has probably given you all sorts of news. That is why I shall close now with the affectionate and humble greetings I offer your wife, your son, and your daughter-in-law. I am, in the love of Our Lord and His most holy Mother, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

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that the Priests of the Mission "shall be obliged to go every five years throughout all the estates of the above-mentioned lord and lady to preach, hear confessions, catechize, and perform all the good works" mentioned in this same contract. (Cf. vol. XIII, no. 59.)

<sup>3</sup>Catherine de Gondî, the Duchesse de Beaupréau and the wife of Pierre de Gondî whom she had married August 3, 1633.

<sup>4</sup>Honoré d' Albert, Seigneur de Cadenet, peer and Marshal of France, vidame [minor noble] of Amiens, created Duc de Chaulnes by Letters Patent of January 1621, Governor of Picardy beginning July 3, 1633. He later became Governor of the city and citadel of Amiens, then of the province of Auvergne, and was in command at the siege of Arras in 1640. He died October 30, 1649.

<sup>5</sup>Pierre de Gondî, the eldest son of Father de Gondî and the former pupil of Saint Vincent, had succeeded his father in his titles and high positions. He was, like him, General of the Galleys and Seigneur de Gannes.

155. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1632 and 1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

May the charity of Jesus Christ, which urges you to think of me, be your health!

I have just learned that you are ailing somewhat and that worries me a little. I beg you to do all you can to get better for His service. I most humbly thank you for all the care and charity which you exercise towards me, for such good bread, your preserves, your apples, and for what I only now learned that you have just sent me. Oh! surely, Mademoiselle, that is too much! God knows with what pleasure I receive your gifts; yet also, ever in my mind is the fear that you are depriving yourself of necessities in order to practice charity in this way. In the name of God, do not do it any more.

I went out today and am none the worse for it, and tomorrow I shall have to go to Saint-Lazare.<sup>2</sup> I admit that I have worked rather hard these past few days, but I am actually out of doors, thank God.

Well, our mail has left for Rome and, because we still have a few less pressing matters to work on, I shall be able to come and spend the night here tomorrow and stay for a few days. Therefore, we shall have more time to discuss matters with you. I was setting aside tomorrow for seeing you here at Mass; but, since your cold requires you to stay in your room, I beg you not to budge from it; we shall see each other on my return. If I do not see you tomorrow morning at your house before I leave, it will be because I am practicing the little rule of the Missionaries with regard to people

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**Letter 155.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written at the time when Saint Vincent was established at Saint-Lazare (after 1631) and Saint Louise was living near the Collège des Bons-Enfants (before May 1636).

<sup>2</sup>Saint Vincent had been at the Collège des Bons-Enfants for a few days.

in the Charity.<sup>3</sup> But, nevertheless, if you wish to see me, you have only to say so, if by chance you are not well.

I did not talk to the wife of the Keeper of the Seals.<sup>4</sup> I thought it would be better for it to be Madame Goussault, the President's wife, or Madame Poulailon; I shall talk to them about it. In the meantime, I wish you a good evening and am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

156. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

January 17, 1634

What shall I tell you about those ecclesiastics from Provence?<sup>1</sup> You saw from the letter they wrote to me, how they have formed ties with the congregation of Father Paul de Motta;<sup>2</sup> that they tell

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<sup>3</sup>Saint Vincent had made it a rule for his Missionaries not to go and visit the young women and the Ladies of the Charity except in cases of necessity or utility.

<sup>4</sup>Pierre Séguier had received the Seals on February 28, 1633. His wife, Madeleine Fabri, born November 22, 1597, died in Paris on February 6, 1683. She assisted Saint Vincent and Saint Louise with her influence and her fortune.

**Letter 156.** - Reg. 2, pp. 87 and 3.

<sup>1</sup>The Congregation of the Missionary Priests of the Most Blessed Sacrament, founded in the city of Avignon in 1632 and approved by Innocent X in 1647. Its object was the work of missions and the direction of seminaries. Its founder, Christophe d'Authier de Sigau, was born in Marseilles in 1609. He became Bishop of Bethlehem in 1651 and died in Valence in 1667. (Cf. Nicolas Borely, *Vie de Mgr. Christophe d'Authier de Sigau, évêque de Bethléem* [new ed., Lyons: n.p., 1703].) Further on we shall see the renewed efforts Authier de Sigau made to bring about the union of his Congregation with that of Saint Vincent, and the steps taken by the latter to have the name of *Missionary Priests* changed because of the confusion that might arise.

<sup>2</sup>Paolo Motta, a Milanese gentleman, had founded in Rome in 1620 the Congregation of Saint Joseph which Paul V approved and to which he gave an oratory near the collegial church of San Lorenzo in *Damaso*. Before 1646, the priests who formed its membership did not live a life in common; they instructed the people, heard confessions, preached the word of God, and spread the practice of spiritual exercises. Father Paolo Motta died January 22, 1650. Several



me they have the same purpose as we; and that if we wish to join forces, they will be allowed to make that agreement and to come to this city with someone from the aforesaid congregation of Father Paul to discuss it with us. I praise God that He is so good as to raise up in this century so many good and holy souls for the assistance of the poor common people. I beg Him with all my heart to bless the plans of those holy ecclesiastics and grant them success for His glory. As for the union, it is to be desired; but unions require the same end, the same means and, what is more, one same spirit. Even though people have the same aim, they cannot help being divided. All the Orders in the Church have the same end, which is charity, and for lack of the same means they do not always agree. An Order has the same end, the same means, and the same spirit; nevertheless, it often has disorders.

I say this, Monsieur, so that you may realize how important it is, if we do unite, that we have the same end, the same means, and the same spirit and that, before uniting, we be mutually informed about one another's expectations, the means of attaining them, and whether we have one same spirit. Now, they are right in offering to see us to find out about these things. If they do us this charity, God knows with what pleasure we shall welcome them and how simply and familiarly we shall approach the subject.

I am writing a letter to that good priest — you will see it. If he is in the same disposition in which he wrote to me, and Father Paul is, too, give him the note; but, if he is not, do not give it to him. If he is and Father Paul does not want to have anything to do with the affair, you will decide whether it would be wise to give it to him. If they really want to join us, to tend to the same end, to accept our means, and to send some men here to take on our spirit, then I think there is nothing to be said against the union.

I just remembered a serious error which I noticed only too late:

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renowned figures came from the Congregation of Saint-Joseph, among others Cardinal Michelangelo Ricci. (Cf. Pierre Hélyot, *Histoire des Ordres religieux et militaires* [new ed., 8 vols., Paris: Louis, 1792], vol. VIII, p. 25.)

in the exposition of our Bulls,<sup>3</sup> it seems to me that pastors are spoken of in an insulting way. How can that be remedied? I beg you to look into the matter and have that part taken out.

156a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[January 1634]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter yesterday and your outline of the rules for your Daughters, which I have not yet had the chance to read. I shall do so as soon as I can. As for what you tell me about them,<sup>2</sup> I have no doubt that they are as you describe them to me, but we have to hope that they will mature and that prayer will allow them to see their faults and encourage them to correct them. It would be well for you to tell them what constitutes solid virtue, especially that of interior and exterior mortification of our judgment, our will, memories, sight, hearing, speech, and the other senses, of the attachments we have to bad, useless, and even to good things; all this for the love of Our Lord Who acted in this way. You will have to strengthen them a great deal in all these matters, especially in the virtue of obedience and in that of indifference. But, because too much talking is harmful to you, do so only occasionally. It would be well for you to tell them that they must be helped to

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<sup>3</sup>The Bull *Salvatoris Nostri* (cf. vol. XIII, no. 81; also *Acta Apostolica in gratiam Congregationis Missionis* [Paris: Chamerot, 1876], p. 3; Arch. nat., M 209, no. 6). Although dated January 12, 1633, the Bull had not as yet been promulgated when Saint Vincent wrote this letter. The passage that offended the Saint was suppressed.

**Letter 156a.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter. The discovery of Saint Vincent's letter to Father Charles Faure (no. 156b) mandates the repositioning of this letter to Saint Louise (formerly no. 182).

<sup>1</sup>Reference to the letter to Father Faure, the date of which is certain, enables us to alter the date which Coste originally used [between 1634 and 1638].

<sup>2</sup>The Daughters.

acquire this virtue of mortification and given practice in it. I shall also tell them so that they will be well disposed to it.

Let us allow that good young woman to continue the practices of the Third Order since she is a member. Please have her make her devotions privately on Wednesdays. I really wish that widow from Colombes<sup>3</sup> could read; please have her see us. Well! I just noticed, on rereading your letter, that she has two children; if that is so, how could we admit her?

I keep forgetting to have the pictures bought for your Daughters. M. de Sergis has just come back; I shall ask him to do it.

Enclosed is a short note to Father Faure<sup>4</sup> for M. Gallois' son.<sup>5</sup> I would like to have more influence with him than I do in this matter. He will understand. Well then, let us end with the request I am making that you take care of your health. I am, in this hope, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. D.

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<sup>3</sup>A commune near Paris.

<sup>4</sup>Charles Faure, born at Louveciennes (Yvelines), November 29, 1594, took the habit of the Canons Regular in the Abbey of Saint-Vincent de Senlis and was professed 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 in the Monastery of Sainte-Geneviève in Paris. He was so successful that, in order 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. He placed them under the Abbey of Sainte-Geneviève and appointed Father Faure Vicar General of the new Institute. Father Faure visited the establishments, laid down the 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 Father Faure Superior General for a term of three years. He was reelected in 1637. The constitutions not permitting a third term, he yielded his position in 1640 to Father Boulart, but kept such extensive powers for himself that his successor could do nothing without his advice. When Father Boulart's three-year term ended, Father Faure was once again placed at the head of the Congregation of France. He fell ill that same year and died November 4, 1644. His attitude toward Saint Vincent was rather cold and reserved. He left several works on asceticism. (Cf. Lallemand and Chartonnet, *op. cit.*)

<sup>5</sup>Perhaps the son of Philippe Gallois, Saint Vincent's notary.

156b. - TO FATHER FAURE, SUPERIOR OF THE CONGREGATION  
OF SAINTE-GENEVIEVE

Reverend Father,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have been asked to use my influence with you to request you, as I am doing most humbly, to be pleased to receive among your seminarians the son of Monsieur Gallois. I have heard much good about the latter and that he willingly assists those houses where he has children. Therefore, please do him this charity, Father. In addition to your being satisfied with it, I shall add this obligation to many others I have towards you, and I shall be all my life, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Reverend Father, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL  
prêtre indigne de la Mission<sup>1</sup>

Bons-Enfants, January 1634

*Addressed:* Father Faure, Superior of the Congregation of  
Sainte-Geneviève

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**Letter 156b.** - Archives of the Mission, Paris, photocopy; the present location of the original letter is unknown. Coste appears to have mentioned this letter in vol. II, no. 694, where he states that Charavay gave a description of it in his catalogue. The now certain date necessitates the placement of the letter in vol. I.

<sup>1</sup>*Unworthy priest of the Mission.* In later letters, Saint Vincent often wrote the initials of this French phrase after his name. It has been traditional in the Congregation of the Mission to append to one's name the Latin of this French phrase of Saint Vincent: *indignus sacerdos Congregationis Missionis* or the initials *i. s. C. M.* Hereafter, this edition will use the latter abbreviation.

157. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

[Between 1626 and 1635]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I thank you most humbly for everything in your letter and was quite consoled by what you told me in it. I am indeed looking forward to finding you truly strong and brave. Now then, let us become so, Mademoiselle, and draw our strength from our weakness which serves as a reason for Our Lord to become Himself our strength.

I praise God for what you told me about your brother,<sup>2</sup> Mademoiselle, and pray that he will continue to grow stronger and stronger in the fidelity Our Lord is asking of us.

I am even better than a few days ago. The doctor, who just left here, advised me to go, on the first nice day that comes along, to the mission that is going to be given in a place two leagues from here. I shall not fail, meanwhile, to remember you in the Holy Sacrifice, which I shall offer to God for your intentions, being in His love, your. . . .

158. - TO JACQUES PERDU, IN POISSY<sup>1</sup>

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Blessed be God for the difficulties He is pleased that you should

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**Letter 157.** - Reg. 1, f<sup>o</sup> 68 v<sup>o</sup>. The copyist notes that the original was written in Saint Vincent's own hand.

<sup>1</sup>Period within which the name of Mademoiselle du Fay appears in the correspondence of Saint Vincent.

<sup>2</sup>Antoine Hennequin, Sieur de Vincy.

**Letter 158.** - Collection for the process of beatification.

<sup>1</sup>A Priest of the Mission, born in Grandvilliers (Oise), April 19, 1607. He entered the

encounter! You must honor, on this occasion, the ones His Son had on earth. O Monsieur, how much greater they were since, because of the aversion people had for Him and His teachings, He was forbidden entrance to every province and [it] cost Him His life! People were right to suppose that He was preparing His disciples when He told them that He was sending them like sheep in the midst of wolves; when He told them that people would make fun of them, scoff at them, and spit in their face; that fathers would turn against their children and children would persecute their fathers; and, finally, when He justified the ceremony of shaking the dust from their garments when they found themselves among people who would not make good use of their teachings.

Let us make good use of them, Monsieur, on these occasions, and let us, like them, bear with the contradictions that will befall us in the service of God. Rather, let us rejoice as at a great good when they come upon us, and let us begin on this occasion to use them as the Apostles did, following the example of their Master, Our Lord. If we do this, oh! rest assured that the very means by which the devil has tried to battle against you will help you to overcome him. You will rejoice all heaven and the good souls of earth who will see or hear of it. The very persons with whom you have to deal will bless you in the end and be grateful to you as a collaborator in their salvation. However, *hoc genus daemoniorum non ejicitur nisi in oratione et patientia*.<sup>2</sup>

The holy modesty and interior recollection of the Company will be yet other means to this end, and notably circumspection in questions which one cannot ask in confession without some difficulty.

For the love of God, Monsieur, work out well together the

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Congregation of the Mission in 1630, was ordained a priest in 1632, placed in Richelieu in January 1638, and died in September 1644.

<sup>2</sup>*This kind of demon is not cast out except by prayer and patience.* As was his wont, Saint Vincent alludes to a biblical passage without quoting it exactly. Compare: Mk. 9:29 - "This kind you can drive out only by prayer"; and Mt. 17:21 - "[This kind does not leave but by prayer and fasting.]" (NAB)

things that are to be asked and the manner. Monsieur Renar has great experience in that matter. Come to an agreement about it and learn how to overcome the dislike those people have for the Missionaries so as to refrain from what has scandalized them or do the opposite if the occasion arises. I beg you, Monsieur, to look into the matter and to let me know about it, as also about the place from which the talk of this scandal is coming.

Having weighed all the reasons you sent me, I think it will be good in the future to give only a short catechism lesson at which all the boys and girls will be present, reserving the right to decide otherwise if the large numbers require it. And because an excess of the word of God *dat illis nauseam*,<sup>3</sup> please follow Monsieur Renar's advice with regard to the discontinuance of sermons on Sundays and feasts, and even with regard to the other days if he, together with the Prior, thinks it advisable. By the latter's advice, I believe, he has probably told you what he told you about the sermons, and wisely, since *contraria contrariis curantur*.<sup>4</sup> O Monsieur, how willingly we ought to fall in with the opinions of others! Saint Vincent Ferrer observed this practice as a means of perfection and holiness. If it is good for an individual, why not for a company? And nevermind saying that you are not accustomed to it, because it is God's good pleasure that we adapt ourselves to people's moods, to places, and to times. Oh! let us act then in this way, and you will constantly see what it will win for you before God.

I am sending you the organ and shall delegate you to deliver it if Monsieur Régnier<sup>5</sup> cannot attend to it, or if indeed that gentleman is not discreet enough and you think I should recall him. In that

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<sup>3</sup>*Nauseates them.*

<sup>4</sup>*Contraries are cured by contraries.*

<sup>5</sup>Jacques Régnier, a Priest of the Mission, was born in the diocese of Boulogne (Picardy) and entered the Congregation of the Mission in August 1627 in Paris. He was ordained a priest in April 1632.

regard I beg you to observe him carefully, and Leleu<sup>6</sup> as well, and to give me accurate information concerning their behavior.

As for the wood and the other things, I greatly fear that the Prior will refuse to pay you for them. Please find out where you can get them and if you can afford to get them elsewhere even though everything is rather expensive.

I praise God that the good Prior of Aigue sometimes eats with the Company. Show him that you enjoy this and thank him affectionately and humbly.

I beg you, moreover, to strongly recommend holy modesty to the Company as being perhaps one of the most efficacious means of doing good to those people.

This, Monsieur, is all I can tell you for the present, except that I add thereto my most humble regards to the Prior, to Monsieur Renar, and to Monsieur Flahan.<sup>7</sup> Please commend an important affair to God and tell Monsieur Renar that it will perhaps be advisable for him to be present next Wednesday at two o'clock at the meeting at which the pastors will be present and the catechism will be discussed. He will be able to leave the same day and be back home the following day at noon.

Good evening, Monsieur. I am your servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

February 1634

*Addressed:* Monsieur Perdu, Priest of the Mission, in Poissy

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<sup>6</sup>This name does not appear in the catalogue of the Mission, although Leleu appears to be a member of the Congregation at this time.

<sup>7</sup>A priest in the Congregation of the Mission, although his name does not appear in the catalogue of the Congregation; Saint Vincent advised him "that he would do better somewhere else. . . ." (Cf. no. 197.)



159. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between January and March 1634]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The meeting took place yesterday at Madame Goussault's house.<sup>2</sup> Mesdames de Villesabin,<sup>3</sup> Bailleul,<sup>4</sup> Dumecq,<sup>5</sup> Sainctot,<sup>6</sup> and Poulaillon were there. The proposal was accepted and [they]

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**Letter 159.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Collet (*op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 232) defers the first meeting of the Ladies of the Hôtel-Dieu until after July 27, 1634. No. 177 does not allow us to put it so late. Recent historians of Saint Louise, using this same no. 177 as a basis, place the institution of the Ladies in June 1634. They did not note that no. 163, subsequent to this one, was written at the beginning of April at the latest.

<sup>2</sup>In her visits to the patients of the Hôtel-Dieu, Madame Goussault had noticed that there was much to be done for their relief. She spoke about this to Saint Vincent who dared not interfere in a work for which others were responsible. The Hôtel-Dieu was under the Canons of Notre-Dame and, more specifically, under one of them, the Master, to whom they had entrusted the administration. The Augustinian Sisters nursed the sick. There were about one hundred professed nuns and fifty novices who dedicated themselves to this work with an attention worthy of praise. We can understand that in these circumstances Saint Vincent was unwilling to initiate anything. But Madame Goussault held fast. She told the Archbishop of Paris about her project, thinking he would have sufficient authority over the Saint to prevail upon him to assume the direction of a society of ladies who would look after the needs of the patients at the Hôtel-Dieu. What she had foreseen came about. Saint Vincent gathered together a few devout and charitable women at the home of Madame Goussault on the rue du Roi-de-Sicile. The above letter tells us what was decided there.

<sup>3</sup>Madame de Villesabin, née Isabeau Blondeau, was the widow of Jean Phelippeaux de Villesabin or Villesavin, the secretary of orders for Marie de Médicis, and Comte de Busançais. She was noted for her elegance, politeness, and charity. Ceremonious to excess, the affectation of her manners had caused her to be called "the most humble servant of the human race." She received into her magnificent home on the Place Royale the most distinguished people in Paris. She died February 26, 1687, at the age of ninety-four.

<sup>4</sup>Elisabeth-Marie Maillier, the wife of Nicolas de Bailleul, Seigneur de Vattetot-sur-Mer and Seigneur de Soisy-sur-Seine.

<sup>5</sup>This name sometimes appears in the Saint's letters to Saint Louise, especially in connection with the work of the Foundlings.

<sup>6</sup>Marie Dalibray was the widow of J. B. de Sainctot, Treasurer of France. She was a very cultured woman, in contact with the most illustrious people in literature and the arts. She used to receive Pascal and his family into her home. Voiture had dedicated to her his translation of *Orlando Furioso*.

decided to have another meeting next Monday.<sup>7</sup> In the meantime, we shall offer the affair to God and shall receive Holy Communion for that intention. Each one will propose the matter to the ladies and young women of her acquaintance. What do you think of Mademoiselle Guérin? Madame de Beaufort<sup>8</sup> will join them. We shall need you and your Daughters; we think four of them will be necessary. That is why we must see about a way of getting good ones. Think about the sister of that good young woman you have. Talk about it to Michelle. I do not know whether the widow of Les Clayes<sup>9</sup> would want to do it and would be suitable. Moreover, what shall we do with her children? I am going to Saint-Lazare and shall perhaps come back this evening to spend the night here.<sup>10</sup>

Madame Goussault spoke to me yesterday about the recall from exile of that widow you sent to her. I told her that I would scruple interfering in those matters unless I knew the person as well as I know you, and that the wife of the Keeper of the Seals<sup>11</sup> can scarcely get mixed up in those affairs. If you take my advice, you will relieve yourself of such occupations. The law did not deal with her in that way without serious grounds.

Well now, you see that your work is growing more diverse. Strengthen yourself as much as you can.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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<sup>7</sup>There were more people at this second meeting than at the first. Madame Goussault was elected president. She was given an assistant and a treasurer. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXIX, p. 133.)

<sup>8</sup>Perhaps Suzanne de Fournel, the widow of Gilles de Beaufort, Seigneur de Mondicourt, Montdiès, Malmaison, and other places. He died in 1631.

<sup>9</sup>A small commune in Yvelines.

<sup>10</sup>At the Bons-Enfants.

<sup>11</sup>Madame Séguier.

160. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between January and March 1634]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

I thank you most humbly for the good you have done for that good widow.<sup>2</sup> I believe they will not be taking any of your young women for the Hôtel-Dieu. They feel that some of those being offered from the city will be more suitable for representing the Ladies in their absence and they are probably right.

But how are you? Please send me word. I praise God with all my heart for the most loving dedication He gives you of belonging entirely to Him and I am, in His love, your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

Pardon me if I am so brief; I am in a great hurry.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

161. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1634, around March]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Yesterday three fine girls from Argenteuil<sup>2</sup> came to offer their

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**Letter 160.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>There is no doubt that this letter was written shortly after no. 159.

<sup>2</sup>Perhaps the widow mentioned in the preceding letter.

**Letter 161.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter seems to have been written very shortly before no. 163, which is from March or April 1634.

<sup>2</sup>Since the Department of Seine-et-Oise was divided into three departments in 1963, Argen-

services for the Charity at the suggestion of the priest to whom I had someone mention it. He is supposed to come and see me tomorrow concerning the matter. I did not send them to you because it was too late when they arrived but, according to what they told me, they will come to see you on Friday.

I see no great difficulty in Jacqueline's<sup>3</sup> going to her brother's wedding. Marguerite, from Saint-Paul,<sup>4</sup> will be doing likewise, and from what she said, she is also supposed to send you a fine young woman. Mademoiselle de la Bistrade<sup>5</sup> and Madame Forest are supposed to come and ask you to relieve them of Nicole because of her many health problems and because Marie, who is bearing the whole burden, cannot go on unless you send them someone to replace Nicole.<sup>6</sup> They will be asking you, therefore, about both matters and Mademoiselle de la Bistrade will promise to pay you for Nicole's food. I told her I would write to you about it. So think about it, Mademoiselle, and about whether that poor young woman who is so weak and ill-fitted for the Charity could earn her living by sewing or some other trade when she is a little stronger. And do all you can, in the name of God, to get well yourself.

I am very glad that you did not go out yesterday. On the day you do go out, take something before leaving. Our Lord is a continual Communion for those who are united to what He wills and does not will.

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teuil is now the principal town of one of the subdivisions (*arrondissements*) of the Department of Val-d'Oise.

<sup>3</sup>In his letters, Saint Vincent most often designates the Daughters of Charity only by their first name. Sometimes, to avoid confusion, he adds the name of the place or parish where they are. It would be difficult, from this distance in time, to give the corresponding family names, either because we never find them in his letters or in those of Saint Louise, or because several Sisters had the same first name.

<sup>4</sup>The Charity of Saint-Paul parish in Paris went back to the year 1632 or 1633. There, as elsewhere, Saint Louise had placed her Daughters at the service of the Ladies.

<sup>5</sup>Perhaps the wife of Jacques de la Bistrade, Seigneur des Marets, who was appointed Master of Appeals, August 1, 1647, and died December 20, 1650. She was also, perhaps, a relative of Nicolas Pavillon, the future Bishop of Alet, whose mother was Catherine de la Bistrade.

<sup>6</sup>Madame Forest later reported that Nicole had improved (cf. no. 163) and that she wanted to keep her.

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

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, Monday morning

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

162. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between January and March 1634]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

All things come to him who waits; this is true, as a rule, even more in the things of God than in others. It is not advisable for me to be the one who speaks to the Master<sup>2</sup> — for a reason of my own — unless I meet him by accident. If Madame Goussault, the President's wife, thinks it appropriate, she can say a word to him about it, if you want to let him know and if she does not see any disadvantage in doing so. It is true that it is advisable to see the Ladies<sup>3</sup> once more, both to give them some advice concerning that matter and to teach them how they ought to instruct the sick to examine their consciences and recognize their sins.

I have not yet been able to go to the Madeleine;<sup>4</sup> I shall go there tomorrow if I can. In the meantime, forgive me. As for Nicole, it is greatly to be feared that she will never change because of her age. On the other hand, I would still find it hard to give my vote to send her away. Try depriving her a little of Holy Communion;

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**Letter 162.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written a few days after the establishment of the Ladies of the Hôtel-Dieu.

<sup>2</sup>The name given to the Canon-administrator of the Hôtel-Dieu.

<sup>3</sup>The Ladies of the Hôtel-Dieu.

<sup>4</sup>Monastery of Sainte-Madeleine where women led a penitential life in reparation for previous indiscretions.

perhaps that will help her. If not, *in nomine Domini*. After you have done what you can, if she does not improve, send her away.

I send you my regards, meanwhile, and ask God to keep you in perfect health and in His love. I am, in this same love of Our Lord, your most humble. . . .

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

### 163. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[March or April 1634]<sup>1</sup>

I [cannot help]<sup>2</sup> telling you, Mademoiselle, how reluctantly I depart for Villers<sup>3</sup> with M. Lumague<sup>4</sup> because I have not had the consolation of seeing you on account of our ordinands whose number includes the Commander de Sillery.<sup>5</sup> I assure you that if you knew how sorry I am you would have pity on me. Oh, well! Please do all you can to stay well. I hope to return next Monday.

Madame Forest came here to thank us for the good stout young woman you wanted to send them, because their Nicole is better. That being the case, I think you will do well to send Jacqueline to the Hôtel-Dieu, or else Jeanne. The one who is left can help at your Charity<sup>6</sup> with the young woman from Grigny.<sup>7</sup>

Madame Goussault thinks it advisable for us to consider finding

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**Letter 163.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Reference to the ordination retreat of Commander de Sillery prompts us to assign this date.

<sup>2</sup>The words in brackets are not found in the original letter. This interpolation by Coste supplies for an obvious omission.

<sup>3</sup>Villers-sous-Saint-Leu (Oise).

<sup>4</sup>Jean-André Lumague, Seigneur de Villers-sous-Saint-Leu, father of Mademoiselle Pollalion, and a great friend of Saint Vincent.

<sup>5</sup>The Commander said his first Mass on Holy Thursday, April 13, 1634, a few days after his ordination.

<sup>6</sup>The Charity of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.

<sup>7</sup>A commune in Essonne.

you a place to live near Notre-Dame. Think it over, please, and do your best to stay well.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am leaving in an hour and am your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

**163a. - TO SISTER HELENE-ANGELIQUE LHULLIER<sup>1</sup>**

Saint-Lazare, Palm Sunday, at nine o'clock<sup>2</sup>

My very dear Sister,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received with consolation your letter of yesterday, as well as that of our worthy Mother<sup>3</sup> for the Visitor,<sup>4</sup> whom I also hold most dear. I hope to share in the profit you derive from reading these letters. Thank you for all that.

Please, my dear Sister, tell the good young woman destined for Le Mans<sup>5</sup> through your kindness what she has to do. Her brother just told me that she is in a state of holy impatience on account of her happiness.

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**Letter 163a.** - Archives of the Mission, original autograph letter published in the *Annales* (1926), pp. 473-474, and (1937), p. 237, and later reprinted in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, p. 11.

<sup>1</sup>Religious of the first monastery of the Visitation in Paris.

<sup>2</sup>Most probably April 9, 1634.

<sup>3</sup>Saint Jane Frances de Chantal.

<sup>4</sup>To prevent any deviation from the primitive spirit of the Visitation, Saint Vincent and other friends of that Community thought it would be well to have Visitors appointed to make canonical visitations of the convents in order to eradicate abuses and to watch over the preservation of the traditions of the Order. It appears that, before her death, Saint Jane Frances finally agreed to that practice. (Cf. Roger Devos, "Le testament spirituel de sainte Jeanne-Françoise de Chantal et l'affaire du visiteur apostolique," *Revue Historique Spirituelle*, 48 [1972], pp. 453-456; 49 [1973], 199-126, 341-366.)

<sup>5</sup>The Visitation was established in Le Mans in 1634. The first six religious arrived there on July 22, 1634.

I am, in the love of Our Lord and with the affection that He knows, my very dear Sister, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL  
i.s.C.M.

164. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1640]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Here I am, back from the mission of Villers<sup>2</sup> since last evening and in good health, thank God. Please let me know the state of yours and whether you think it well to send for two fine young women chosen by Mademoiselle Poulailion for the Charity. They seem to be very good young women. Let me know then by this messenger what you think, please, because I have to give Mademoiselle Poulailion an answer tomorrow. She sends you her regards but will not be here until Saturday.

I shall have the pleasure of seeing you as soon as twenty-five ordinands allow me to do so. I am, meanwhile, Mademoiselle, your servant.

V. D.

Wednesday morning

*Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras*

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**Letter 164.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>It is impossible from the content of this letter to assign a date to it more accurately. As Coste observed in dating this letter, when writing to Saint Louise after 1639, Saint Vincent almost always wrote words like "Wednesday morning" and/or the time of day at the head of the letter.

<sup>2</sup>Villers-sous-Saint-Leu.



165. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1634 and 1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

I just arrived from town about fifteen minutes ago and found the enclosed upon my return. You see that I have to be at Saint-Lazare before seven o'clock tomorrow, which will deprive me of the consolation of coming to see you in the morning as I had planned. Please forgive me and on Thursday, God willing, I shall make up for my absence, being unable to do so tomorrow because we are having the priests' meeting at Saint-Lazare.<sup>2</sup>

I saw good Madame Saunier this morning and found her all afire for the Charity and ready to become a member. But a problem has arisen in that affair which causes us to judge it advisable to postpone the Ladies' meeting, which was supposed to have taken place on Thursday, until another day. Please inform her of that, Mademoiselle, and do all you can to stay well. In that regard, it will be a great help to you not to worry so much about your Daughters, to eat well, and not to go out so early.

I bid you good day and I am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

166. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 198a.)

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**Letter 165.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 73.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written after the establishment of the Ladies of the Hôtel-Dieu and before the transfer of the Daughters of Charity to La Chapelle.

<sup>2</sup>For the weekly conference.

167. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1634]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have seen that good young woman, Madeleine. I think you will have to work with her a little as her passions are rather strong. So what! When these young women have the strength to overcome themselves, they work wonders afterwards. Accept her, therefore, please, and I shall speak to the wife of the Keeper of the Seals.<sup>2</sup>

As for that good young woman from Argenteuil who is melancholy, I think you are right in raising objections to taking her, for it is a strange disposition, that of melancholy. I think that you have enough young women for some time and that you should train them well to read and sew so that they can work in the country.

I shall be expecting you on Tuesday. Good day, Mademoiselle. I am, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Therefore, send that young woman's companion back, please.

168. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 198b.)

169. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 198c.)

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**Letter 167.** - The original letter is at the Provincial House of the Daughters of Charity (Provincia de Santa Luisa de Marillac) in Madrid.

<sup>1</sup>This letter seems to have been written in the early days of the Company of the Daughters of Charity and shortly after no. 161.

<sup>2</sup>Madame Séguier.

**170. - TO SAINT LOUISE**

(Now 198c.)

**171. - TO SAINT LOUISE**

(Now 198d.)

**172. - TO SAINT LOUISE**

(Now 198e.)

**173. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LIANCOURT**

(Now 198f.)

**174. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LIANCOURT**

(Now 198g.)

**175. - TO SAINT LOUISE**

[Between 1632 and 1636, probably July 22]<sup>1</sup>

I am like you, Mademoiselle; there is nothing that bothers me more than uncertainty. But I do indeed greatly desire that God

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**Letter 175.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written after Saint Vincent took over Saint-Lazare (January 8, 1632) and before the establishment of the Daughters of Charity in La Chapelle (May 1636). The mention

may be pleased to grant me the grace of making everything indifferent to me, and to you as well. Come now, we shall make every effort, please God, to acquire this holy virtue.

Yesterday I was at Saint-Victor<sup>2</sup> until five o'clock with the Archbishop,<sup>3</sup> who had ordered me to come there. Then he had me get into a carriage to go to the city with him. From there I came back to spend the night here<sup>4</sup> without going to the collège. That is the reason you have not heard from me. If this afternoon, right after dinner, you can take the trouble to come to the collège, we shall discuss everything, and I shall be, in the love of Our Lord, that of the holy Virgin, and of Saint Magdalen, your servant.

#### 176. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1634 and 1636]<sup>1</sup>

So here at last is the first victim Our Lord has chosen to take from your Daughters of Charity.<sup>2</sup> May He be forever blessed! I trust, Mademoiselle, that she is very happy, seeing that she died in the practice of a virtue with which she could not be lost; for she died in the exercise of divine love since she died in that of charity. I am asking Our Lord to be therein your consolation and that of our very dear Sisters. I beg you to wish them all a good day for me.

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of Saint Magdalen, whose feast day is July 22, leads us to assume that Saint Vincent was writing this letter on that date.

<sup>2</sup>Abbey of Saint-Victor.

<sup>3</sup>Jean-François de Gondi.

<sup>4</sup>At Saint-Lazare.

**Letter 176.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written between the time of the foundation of the Daughters of Charity (November 29, 1633) and the transfer of the Motherhouse to La Chapelle (May 1636).

<sup>2</sup>Marguerite Naseau is certainly not the Sister in question here; she had died of the plague in Saint-Louis Hospital in February 1633.

I think it is too much to put off the funeral until tomorrow, seeing that you have no other room in which to put it;<sup>3</sup> it is to be feared that it may be too greatly upsetting for our sick Sisters and for you. You could speak to Saint-Nicolas<sup>4</sup> about it, asking whether it could be done this evening. If not, well, send the notice as it is, but the Ladies in office cannot be there so early in the morning.

As for the young woman's clothes, I see no objection to giving them to her mother. That will not prevent you from giving her an alms such as twenty sols or a demi-écu<sup>5</sup> each month. I think it will suffice to send the notice to the Sisters and not to the officers in the parishes.

As for the rest at the end of your letter, I agree, and am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

#### 177. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

July 25, 1634

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Yesterday, I received your letter of the second of this month, in which [you] spoke to me about Saint-Lazare and how you have put that affair in order. You spoke to me further about the translation of the Syriac Bible into Latin and about the young Maronite and sent me a copy of one part of the privileges you obtained. Now, I shall tell you that yesterday I saw Advocate-General Bignon<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The body of the deceased.

<sup>4</sup>To the Pastor of Saint-Nicolas.

<sup>5</sup>One *écu* equals three *livres*; one *livre* equals twenty *sols*.

**Letter 177.** - Collection for the process of beatification.

<sup>1</sup>Jérôme Bignon, the Advocate General in the Paris Parlement, a Councillor of the State and

about Saint-Lazare. He is considered one of the most learned, pious, and capable men in his field in Christendom. His advice is that, although he does not think it necessary for us to have recourse to Rome, we do so, nonetheless, in order to root out, as he says, all the pretexts that anyone might have to harass us hereafter, but still that we must try to do so as quickly as possible. He says that a thousand écus is a great deal and for you to make an effort to get the best bargain you possibly can. You must make them understand that this benefice does not depend on the Pope and that it did not belong to the religious of Saint Augustine. It belongs to the city of Paris and its conferral has always rested with the Bishop of Paris. The priors gave him an account every year of the administration of the revenue, which administration was given to them only one hundred or one hundred twenty years ago. Before that, the property was administered by secular priests and sometimes by laymen because it is a leper-house. It so happens that about three hundred years ago a Bishop of Paris named Fulco<sup>2</sup> took the administration away from some secular priests who were living in the house in community, one of whom was the administrator, and gave it to some others on no other authority than his own. Poncher, also a Bishop of Paris,<sup>3</sup> removed it from the hands of secular priests who were also living in community — one of whom was

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the King's librarian, was, according to Moreri (cf. Louis Moreri, *Le Grand Dictionnaire Historique* [5 vols., Paris, 1718]), "one of those extraordinary geniuses whom recent centuries can boldly compare to the greatest figures of antiquity." At the age of fourteen he was already the author of the *Discours de la ville de Rome, principales antiquitez et singularitez d'icelle*. The following year, the *Traité sommaire touchant l'élection du Pape* appeared. His great juridical knowledge made him the trusted adviser of Anne of Austria. He worked on the treaty of alliance with Holland (1649) and on the treaty concluded with the Hanseatic League (1654). He died April 7, 1656, at the age of seventy.

<sup>2</sup>Fulco de Chanac, Bishop of Paris from 1342 to July 25, 1349, the day of his death.

<sup>3</sup>Etienne de Poncher occupied the See of Paris from 1503 to 1519. By a decree of February 20, 1518, "...he promises, both in his own name and in that of his successors, to appoint to the above-mentioned priory and hospice of Saint-Lazare a religious of the said Congregation of Saint-Victor, as long as it is within the reform, and should the reform be relaxed, the said Bishops of Paris will resume their rights to establish in that position, as they did formerly, any other ecclesiastics they wish." (Arch. Nat. MM 534.)

the prior, whom the Bishop used to name *ad nutum*,<sup>4</sup> note that — and he put it into the hands of the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine in 1517. He gave its administration to one of the Canons whom he named prior, likewise removable *ad nutum*, without the authorization of the Pope or any other than his own, not even of the King, or of the court.

The letters of appointment of these priors have always been *ad nutum* and all of them have given an account to the Bishop of Paris. Finally, never has any prior obtained a letter of appointment from the court of Rome except the one in question. He did so in an attempt to retain the position in perpetuity, eight or ten years after he was made prior by the Bishop of Paris. You can see that very fact in his letters of appointment whose date I have sent you. Please hold fast and bear carefully in mind this observation concerning the nature of Saint-Lazare that I am sending you here, so that you may have it thoroughly examined by the officers of that court. Although the benefice does not depend on the Pope, nevertheless, because of the devotion we have of not possessing anything except by his authority, we were eager for both his approval and his blessing. The Advocate-General, who is familiar with the court of Rome from having been there, believes that, if you were to represent all this clearly to the officers, you would soon get to the end of it and inexpensively. If, after all, you cannot succeed within a month after receiving these remarks, he is of the opinion that that should not keep you from coming back here. The confidence we must have in Monsieur Marchand's<sup>5</sup> good will and the recommendations we shall have sent from here will enable us to conclude this affair in a reasonable way, as one does in like matters, in the course of time.

That is why, Monsieur, I most humbly beg you to act in this way and not to delay because of this matter, nor for the proposal you received to work on the translation of the Syriac Bible into Latin.

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<sup>4</sup>*At the will or at the good pleasure* [of the Bishop].

<sup>5</sup>Banker in Rome.

Well do I know that the translation would be useful to the curiosity of some preachers, but not, to my mind, to the winning of the souls of the poor for whom the Providence of God has destined you from all eternity. It must be enough for you, Monsieur, that by the grace of God, you have devoted three of four years to learning Hebrew and know enough to uphold the cause of the Son of God in His original language and to confound His enemies in this kingdom. Imagine then, Monsieur, that there are millions of souls stretching out their hands to you and speaking in this way: "Alas! Monsieur du Coudray, you who have been chosen from all eternity by the Providence of God to be our second redeemer, have pity on us. We are wallowing in ignorance of the things necessary for our salvation and in the sins we have never dared to confess, and for want of your help we will certainly be damned." Imagine further, Monsieur, the Company telling you that for three or four years it has been deprived of your presence and is beginning to miss you. You are one of the first members of the Company and, as such, it needs your advice and example. And please listen, Monsieur, to my heart telling yours that it feels intensely moved by the desire to go to work and die in the Cévennes,<sup>6</sup> and that it shall go if you do not soon come into those mountains. The Bishop from there is crying out for help. He says that the region, which was formerly among the most devout in the kingdom, is now perishing from hunger for the Word of God. There are no villages, except five or six, which do not have some Catholics among the Huguenots; and there are a great number where there are no priests or churches. They are, perhaps, awaiting their salvation from you and me.

Come then, Monsieur, and please do not put it off any longer, unless it be for about a month or six weeks to do what you can with regard to the matter of Saint-Lazare. I will expect you, at the latest, towards the end of November. Bring with you, please, good

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<sup>6</sup>A mountainous region of Southern France between the Departments of Hérault and Ardèche.



Monsieur Gilioli<sup>7</sup> and that good Maronite, if you think he wishes to give himself to God in this Little Company. And please practice speaking modern Greek with him on the way so that you may teach it here if necessary; who knows?

The Ambassador to Turkey<sup>8</sup> did me the honor of writing to me, calling for priests from Saint-Nicolas and from the Mission. He thinks they will be able to do more there than I would dare to tell you. Well now, we shall consider the proper action to take when you are here, both with regard to that affair and to all other matters concerning our consolidation.

But in the name of God, Monsieur, do all you can to obtain the indulgences His Holiness has given the Jesuit Fathers and the Oratorians when they give a mission in rural areas. The indulgence is plenary for those who attend their instructions, go to confession and receive Communion from them in the country. And would to God that you could also get them for the Confraternities of Charity; they are working wonders, by the grace of God! We have established them in several parishes in this city and recently set up another composed of one hundred or one hundred twenty ladies of high rank.<sup>9</sup> Every day, four at a time, they visit and assist eight or nine hundred poor or sick with jellies, soups, broth, preserves and every other kind of sweet — in addition to their ordinary food, which the house provides — so as to dispose those poor people to make a general confession of their past life and to see that those who die leave this world in a good state and that those who recover take the resolution never to offend God again. This is being done with a special blessing of God, not only in Paris but also in the villages. It is for this Confraternity of Charity that Mademoiselle Aubry de Vitry is asking for indul-

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<sup>7</sup>Giovanni Gilioli, a Priest of the Mission registered by mistake in the catalogue of coadjutor brothers, had been born in Ferrara around 1606 and had entered the Congregation of the Mission in July 1629.

<sup>8</sup>The Comte de Marcheville.

<sup>9</sup>The Ladies of the Hôtel-Dieu.

gences, that is, for the women who are members of the confraternity and for those who take care of the alms.

Well now, Monsieur, this is a long letter for you, but then, in no way could I have laid aside my pen any sooner, so much am I comforted by talking to you.

And I must also ask you to bring us five or six books like the first three you sent us concerning the parishes of the Congregation of the Priests of the Assumption of Our Lady, which was organized by Father Savone, the Jesuit, among the Jesuits of Naples. Bring also any other that may be useful to us for the missions and for our ordinands.

Moreover, Monsieur de Creil<sup>10</sup> did not ask me for any money. I shall wait until he does, because I have already sent someone there and they did not find him. I think that, if he had received the order, he would have asked us for it.

I am, meanwhile, as I beg you to take care of your health, in the love of Our Lord, in Whose love I am your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

I almost forgot to tell you that I have not received the Bulls. I praise God that you have had them set right; I cannot tell you the joy that gives me.

*Addressed:* Monsieur du Coudray, Priest, in Rome

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<sup>10</sup>Jean de Creil, Seigneur de Gournay, was the secretary of the King and the father of Marie de Creil, Madame de Marillac. She was the wife of René de Marillac, the son of Michel de Marillac, the Keeper of the Seals, and uncle of Saint Louise.

178. - TO POPE URBAN VIII

[Between July and November 1634]<sup>1</sup>

Most blessed Father,

In the faubourg Saint-Denis in the city of Paris, there is a certain hospital of Saint-Lazare, called a leprosarium, which was founded and endowed a long time ago by the Provost and the City Magistrates to sustain and care for the inhabitants of the city of Paris who were afflicted with leprosy. In the course of time it acquired the name or title of priory, which it still holds. As its revenue, from the beginning of its foundation until the year 1513 or 1514, was administered by secular or regular priests, or perhaps even by laymen, who were usually appointed and removed by the Bishop of Paris in office at any given time, Poncher,<sup>2</sup> of happy memory, who was then the Bishop of Paris, entrusted its administration to the reformed Canons Regular of the Order of Saint Augustine. He brought them to the said priory with the obligation of reciting the Canonical Hours in the church of the priory, celebrating a sung Mass daily, and receiving any poor lepers who might come to them, supplying them with what they needed. Moreover, he stipulated that he, whom the Bishop or the Bishop of Paris at any given time appointed at his pleasure as prior from among the said religious, was to be the administrator of the priory or hospital and of its revenue with the obligation of rendering an account of his administration to the same Bishop each year.

Recently, however, Adrien Le Bon, an expressly professed priest of the same Order, the present Prior or administrator, who had been appointed at the good pleasure of Henri de Gondi of

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**Letter 178.** - *Case from the Diocese of Paris. Beatification and canonization of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul. Concerning the doubt: Whether there is evidence of his theological virtues. . . . Summary of reply*, pp. 43 ff.

<sup>1</sup>This letter appears to have been written between those Saint Vincent wrote to François du Coudray on July 25, 1634 (no. 177), and November 6, 1634 (no. 188).

<sup>2</sup>Etienne de Poncher (1503-1519).

happy memory (during his lifetime), then Bishop of Paris and Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church with the title of Cardinal de Retz,<sup>3</sup> and other religious of the same priory or hospital, devout petitioners of Your Holiness, considering that at present and for a long time now there have been no lepers in the said priory or leprosarium and that, therefore, the revenue bequeathed by the founders no longer serves the uses for which it was intended, reflected that it would be worthwhile to allot that same revenue to those workers who offer food and medicine, if not for the body then for the health of souls afflicted by spiritual leprosy. Among other such institutes, the most conspicuous is the Institute of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission, established by apostolic authority in the city of Paris not very long ago. Its members, according to their own particular institute, have taken as their purpose the instruction of country people living in towns and villages in matters pertaining to the salvation of their souls. They do this without recompense for the love of God, expecting a reward for their labors from God alone. It has been recognized that in carrying out this work they have labored and are laboring with such zeal and fervor that thanks to their instruction many who were infected by heresy in different regions and provinces of France, and especially in the diocese of Montauban — as is well known throughout France — have abjured their heresy and embraced the Catholic faith. Therefore, judging that it would not be contrary to the intention of the founders if the revenues in question, which had been destined for those who care for bodily leprosy, were assigned to those who care for leprosy in souls and also to providing bodily nourishment for the latter from the means at their disposal, the petitioners entered into a contract with the humble co-petitioner of Your Holiness, Vincent de Paul, Superior of that Congregation, who, in the name of the same Congregation,

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<sup>3</sup>Henri de Gondi, the first Cardinal de Retz, was coadjutor Bishop to his uncle, Pierre, from 1598 to 1616 when he succeeded in his own right to the See of Paris. He was made a Cardinal in 1618 and died in 1622.

with the good pleasure of Your Holiness, the Apostolic See, and the Archbishop of Paris, sets and accepts the following terms:

The same Adrien Le Bon, Prior or administrator, and the religious of the priory or hospital have consented, to the extent of their right and interest, that the said priory, together with its church and buildings, and all its property, rights, fruits, appurtenances, and dependencies without exception, be given to or united with the said Congregation. They have surrendered every right they have on this priory or leprosarium or its competent administration with, however, the following conditions, reservations, and agreements: the entire living quarters thus far occupied by the said Adrien, Prior or administrator, as well as the title of Prior shall remain his for life, so that he cannot be removed from these quarters for any reason whatsoever; he remains free to go to the church or priory or hospital and assist at divine offices in his place or seat in the chapter or in the refectory, whenever he chooses to be present; during his lifetime, the estate of Rougemont,<sup>4</sup> a dependency of the said priory or hospital, with all its appurtenances, shall be reserved to him. Moreover, the priests of the Congregation shall pay to the same Adrien as his portion, or instead of pension, as long as he lives, 2,100 livres in the money of these parts, free of all ordinary and extraordinary tithes, reparations, pensions for religious, and other burdens and impositions. This amount is to be paid each year in four installments, namely, on the feasts of Easter, the Birth of Saint John the Baptist, Saint Remi, and Christmas, the first payment being due on the first of these feasts immediately following the taking possession of the said priory or hospital by the priests. In order to assure this payment, not only all the property and revenues of the priory or hospital or leprosarium but also all the property of the Congregation shall

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<sup>4</sup>The farm of Rougemont, situated in the forest of Bondy in the commune of Sevran (Seine-Saint-Denis), covered a vast expanse of woods and cultivated land. Adrien Le Bon donated it to Saint Vincent, February 11, 1645. "on account of the great friendship and affection" he bore the gentlemen of Saint-Lazare. (Arch. nat., S 6698, pièces 1 and 2.)

be bonded and, furthermore, your devout servant Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, priest of the Oratory, shall stand as surety or guarantor. Likewise, all the credits of the said priory or hospital and everything that is, or will be, due to it before the Congregation takes possession shall accrue to the benefit of the said Adrien. He can collect them from his debtors and, for that purpose, he can use all the necessary means, even in the name of the said Congregation. The priests of the Congregation shall be obliged, according to the estimate of experts, to repay him for the provisions and supplies of grain, wine, and wood he had bought in advance for the use of the house, priory, or hospital to the amount that shall be found there at the time of their taking possession.

Adrien himself shall not be liable for the rest of the accounts of his administration from the time when the administration had been entrusted to him to the day of the transfer. Conversely, the priests of the said priory or hospital shall be exonerated with regard to Prior Adrien who, at the time of transfer, will clear the priory of all debts. As regards the revenues or rents bought by Adrien during his administration in favor of the priory or hospital, he shall enjoy them during his lifetime, but, after his death, they shall accrue to the said Congregation.

And since the farm leases of the priory or hospital and the majority of its rents and revenues were paid only on the feasts of Saint Remi and Saint Martin, and in the meantime the said Adrien had to spend large sums and contract debts in order to cover the expenses for the upkeep of the church and the other buildings, and also for the food and the other needs of the religious, it has been agreed that, at the time of transfer, the said Adrien may reimburse himself for these expenses from the above-mentioned leases and rents.

When the Prior Adrien or any of his religious die, the priests shall give them ecclesiastical burial as their benefactors. They shall celebrate three Masses on the day of Prior Adrien's death and on the two following not impeded days. Every year thereafter in perpetuity they shall celebrate on a similar day one anniversary in

the church of the priory or hospital for the repose of his soul. In order to leave to posterity the memory of such an obligation, they shall erect some kind of tombstone or monument in the same church with an inscription of this obligation. They shall also celebrate two solemn services for the founders, benefactors, and religious, one on the first free day after the octave of the Epiphany and the other on the Monday after the feast of the Holy Trinity. For each religious of the priory they shall be obliged to celebrate one service at the end of the year following their death.

The other religious shall also be allowed to stay and live in the same priory or hospital as they did before while living under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop. They shall occupy as their living quarters the apartment overlooking the main road of the faubourg and other suitable places in the priory or hospital. However, the dormitory and the cloister they shall leave entirely free for the priests.

The priests of the Congregation shall also be obliged to pay five hundred livres for food and clothing to each of the religious every year during their lifetime at the aforesaid times or others, as the religious shall wish or their needs may demand. To facilitate the payment of these portions both to Prior Adrien and the other religious, the priests of the Congregation shall allow the religious receiver<sup>5</sup> to continue collecting the revenues until the peaceful possession by the said Congregation. For this purpose they shall submit to him all the necessary powers. If the religious should wish to live in common with the priests, they may do so by paying two hundred livres each for food from the above-mentioned amount of five hundred livres given to each one. The remaining three hundred livres shall be left to them for their other needs.

In the case of illness, either of Adrien or the religious, they shall be cared for in the common infirmary and the priests shall provide them with food, drink, and medicine, and pay for the

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<sup>5</sup>The receiver at that time was Claude Cousin.

physician, surgeon, and pharmacist to the amount of two hundred livres, according to the length of time.

The religious shall also be free to live separately and individually in the priory or hospital, or to retire to some other religious house with the Archbishop's permission, without reduction of the above-mentioned sum. In the event that one of the said religious dies, the priests of the Congregation shall be free from paying his portion or pension and no other religious or novice may be received in place of the deceased. In the event of such a death, the furnishings of the deceased shall be put to the use of the surviving religious personally residing in the priory or hospital. After the death of all the aforesaid religious, all the furnishings shall accrue to the Priests of the Mission.

Likewise, as soon as the priests of the Congregation take possession, they have the obligation of residing personally in the priory or hospital, of serving its church, and of diligently celebrating the Divine Liturgy for the glory of God and the peace of their conscience. They shall receive all the vestments, relics, and furnishings, which will be inventoried and handed over to them by the religious. They shall maintain the buildings and the property of the priory or hospital and make the necessary repairs at their own expense, without any contribution by the religious. They shall also receive any lepers who may present themselves, providing for all their needs both corporal and spiritual.

If, however, the priests of the said Congregation should abandon the priory or hospital, unless they do so because of some act or fault of the religious, they shall have no right to demand any return from the said Adrien or the other religious for the payments advanced, for the repairs they have made, or for any other expenses they have incurred in any way. Moreover, in the event of such desertion or departure, this contract shall be null and void, and the religious shall resume their original rights and privileges.

The above-mentioned Superior, Vincent, has accepted, in the name as above, the agreements, conditions, and everything as expressed above, in the event that the same priory with all its



appurtenances and dependencies should be transferred to his Congregation, and he has promised to fulfill these as well as other conditions which are more fully contained in another contract or agreement and in a public document drawn up concerning this matter.

Whereupon your dedicated servant Jean-François de Gondi, present Archbishop of Paris, to whom belongs, as it belonged to his predecessors, as has been said above, the right to appoint and to remove the prior or administrator of this priory or leprosarium, rightly considering that the introduction of the priests of the said Congregation into this priory or hospital and the concession of its properties and revenues and everything belonging to it would result in the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls, fully cognizant of the contract and everything contained in it, and with the consent of the Most Serene Prince Louis, Most Christian King of France and Navarre, as well as the consent of the Provost of Tradesmen and the City Magistrates, founders of the priory or hospital, by his ordinary power granted, united, attached, and incorporated the said priory or hospital with its church and all its buildings, gardens, properties, appurtenances, fruits and proceeds of any kind, along with all its freedoms, franchises and privileges, to the same Congregation, with the obligation of observing the agreements and conventions contained in that contract, under the following conditions:

The aforesaid Adrien shall also henceforth continue to be the Superior of the said religious, and the religious shall render him the obedience they have professed. The Archbishop of Paris at any given time shall have the jurisdiction and the right of visitation in spiritual and temporal things over the priory and the priests of this Congregation living in it at any given time. The priests of the Congregation, one of whom shall be elected Superior by the same Congregation, shall have the obligation of reciting the Canonical Hours in choir in a moderate voice, without chant, the doors of the choir being closed, and of celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass quietly so that they will not be delayed in their work of

going to villages to instruct the people there. They shall fulfill all the foundations of the priory or hospital and receive into the priory the lepers of the city and its suburbs.

There shall be at least twelve members of this Congregation, at least eight of whom must be priests. Their work shall be to go from village to village in the diocese of Paris at the expense of the Congregation. They shall stay in each village for a month or two, according to the needs of the place, and teach the mysteries of faith, hear confessions, especially general confessions, instruct the people in a Christian life, prepare souls for the worthy reception of the Most Holy Eucharist, and reconcile enemies. At the times when Orders are customarily conferred in Paris, they are obligated to receive the candidates for orders from the Parisian diocese who are sent to the said priory by the Archbishop and, for a period of two weeks before the ordination days, to give them room and board with them and prepare them by spiritual exercises, a general confession, a daily examination of conscience, meditations on the change of their state and of their life and on those things which are proper to each order and suited to the clerical way of life, and by the proper performance of the ecclesiastical ceremonies.

Whatever income of the priory should remain after satisfying these obligations, they shall apply to the common needs of the Congregation. In view of this, the same Archbishop Jean-François, acting in his own name and in the name of his successors, has forever dispensed and exonerated the priests of the Congregation from rendering an account of the funds and administration of the priory or hospital and its appurtenances and dependencies, as stated more in detail in the letter of the same Jean-François.

And since, Holy Father, all these agreements have been entered into for the greater glory of God and the said petitioners wish them to be strengthened by the patronage of Your Holiness and the Apostolic See so that they may last, the petitioners humbly ask Your Holiness to act in this matter and, as a special favor to them, to approve and confirm forever by your apostolic authority and to

validate with everlasting and inviolable apostolic stability this contract entered into by the said petitioners concerning the transfer or union of this priory or hospital, of its church and all its goods, chattels, properties, and dependencies made by the said Archbishop Jean-François to the said Congregation of the Mission, and each and everything contained in the said letter, provided they are lawful and honest, with all their consequences. Supply all and each of the defects, of either law or fact, and the formalities, however substantial and required by law, if any of them should be found. Enjoin the petitioners that they are obliged to observe this contract and its contents and that they cannot withdraw from it. Rescind, as far as necessary, all previous contracts. Remove every connotation of a religious order of life, which, on account of the introduction and residence of the religious of the said order, might have attached or seemed to have attached to the priory or the hospital or the administration of the revenues or to any of its parts and appurtenances, not, however, to the persons of the said religious of this order. Suppress and extinguish any connotation of a religious order of life as to its state, essence, dependence, or denomination. Reduce all of these to the secular state and transfer to the Congregation of the Mission the priory or hospital, which is not an ecclesiastical title or benefice but a simple administration, removable at the will of the Archbishop of Paris at any given time. Transfer in the same way the church and all other parts and appurtenances, all its individual burdens, reservations, agreements, and conditions contained either in the contract, in the document, or in the letter of Archbishop Jean-François, which are here fully and sufficiently repeated, so that its Superior or priests may either themselves, or through one or several persons, in the name of the same Congregation, by their own authority take real and actual possession of the priory or hospital, of its church and property, of all its rights and dependencies, and keep them. May they collect, demand, rent, or lease its fruits, income, revenues, rights, proceeds, and perquisites of any kind and, after they have

discharged the burdens and fulfilled the agreements and conditions contained in the contract and document and in the aforesaid letter of the Archbishop Jean-François, may they use the rest for the common good of the said Congregation without asking permission of the diocesan bishop or anyone else. Likewise, by the same apostolic authority, may they permanently grant, assign, or unite, attach, or incorporate them.

May Your Holiness decree as a special favor that the present letter and the reply to it shall not be included in any similar or dissimilar revocations, suspensions, limitations of graces, or contrary dispositions, but that they shall always be excepted from them, so that whenever they may seem to be revoked, suspended, limited or interfered with, they shall always be brought back to their original and perfectly valid state, restated and fully restored, so that all judges, etc., must judge, etc., accordingly and declare null and void, etc., notwithstanding the aforesaid possibilities to the contrary, or your requirement concerning the indication of the value, or the decree of the recently held Lateran Council prohibiting perpetual unions, except in cases permitted by law, as well as other apostolic constitutions or ordinances, the statutes, etc., of the said hospital or priory or Order, even confirmed by oath, etc., as well as the former Indults, Apostolic Letters, etc., and all other things to the contrary, with their pertinent decrees.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>One reads at the end of the petition: "*Granted as requested. And with the absolution from censures to the effect, etc., and that the original contract and document, as well as the letter of the Archbishop Jean-François concerning this matter, provided they are not contrary to the above, and the true annual value of the revenues of the said priory or hospital, be considered as expressed, as they could be expressed either in whole or in part, and of the perpetual confirmation, approval, addition, suppletion, concession, assignment, union, annexation, incorporation, and other clauses of the broadest sense, and that a better and more accurate account and description of all and everything submitted above may be made in the Letter, even as regards the quality of persons mentioned by name, and others who are necessarily concerned, and let it be committed to the Ordinary with the clause 'After those who have to be called have been called,' and at the request of the parties, and the recommendation of the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church in charge of the affairs of Regulars.*"

*"Given in Rome, at St. Peter's, on the ides of March, in the twelfth year."*

It was therefore on March 15, 1635, that the petition was approved. After these words, the copyist added: "*Taken from the register of apostolic petitions. Verified by me Franciscus Causeo, Superintendent of the register, in the back of book 22, folio 223.*"

179. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

(Now 206a.)

180. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1634]<sup>1</sup>

The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you forever!

Monsieur de Cordes<sup>2</sup> wanted me to ask you, as I am doing most humbly, to be so kind as to go and drop in tomorrow at the Quinze-Vingts<sup>3</sup> to see the officers of the Charity — in the morning — and to do so every day in the afternoon. He also feels that the presence of Mademoiselle Poulaillon would do no harm and that it would encourage those good women.

There are a few practices in that place which are not to be found anywhere else. The sick must be admitted by order of the directors of the hospital, among whom are Monsieur de Cordes and Monsieur Lamy. Monsieur de Cordes suggested to me today that from now on we should accept the better situated among those who are applying and are offering to maintain the Charity: there are about twenty families. But it is felt that incurables, such as consumptives, those with gout, and other types of sick people,

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**Letter 180.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Reference to the Quinze-Vingts necessitates this date.

<sup>2</sup>Denis de Cordes, Counselor at the Châtelet. It was at his request and that of M. Lamy that Saint Vincent had established the Charity at the Quinze-Vingts when the members of the Tuesday Conferences gave a mission there at the end of 1633. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol I, chap. XXIII, p. 109; also, Antoine Godeau [Bishop of Grasse], *L'idée du bon magistrat en la vie et en la mort de M. de Cordes, conseiller au Chastelet de Paris* [Paris: A. Vitré, 1645].)

<sup>3</sup>A hospice founded by Saint Louis, King of France, for three hundred (15X20-quinze X vings) blind poor people. In 1779, Cardinal de Rohan transferred the hospice from the rue Saint-Honoré to the Hôtel des Mousquetaires noirs, 38 rue de Charenton. The institution was suppressed during the Revolution and reestablished in 1814.

should not be admitted. It would be well to suggest to those good people that they give twenty or twenty-five hens to the Charity. One of the members could be given charge of them. The purpose of this is to have eggs, which are very expensive in that area.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

**181. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY**

[Between 1626 and 1635]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

Your entrance into Sainte-Marie<sup>2</sup> is put off until tomorrow. I beg you, Mademoiselle, to postpone your act of piety until then, or else go to confession to your own confessor and receive Communion the day after tomorrow at the Visitation. I have to say Mass there tomorrow between seven and eight and, after that, I have to go into the monastery. Before I enter, everyone will be asked to leave the church and the door will be closed. Such being the case, you would be too rushed. I am letting you know this too late. Forgive me, and I shall be, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your. . . .

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**Letter 181.** - Reg I, f<sup>o</sup> 68 v<sup>o</sup>. The copyist notes that the original was in Saint Vincent's handwriting.

<sup>1</sup>Years within which the name of Mademoiselle du Fay appears in the correspondence of Saint Vincent.

<sup>2</sup>Monastery of the Visitation nuns.

182. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 156a.)

183. - TO MADAME GOUSSAULT

[1634 or 1635]<sup>1</sup>

Madame,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I think it advisable to ask Madame Fortia<sup>2</sup> to come to your officers' meeting at three o'clock. I shall be coming to it to see what should be done about the difficulty at the Hôtel-Dieu. She knows that house very well, has good judgment, and does what good can be done. Please be so kind also, Madame, as to invite Mademoiselle Poulaillon and Mademoiselle du Fay to come. Please send your carriage to the Madeleine for me about half past two.

In the meantime, I bid you good day and am, Madame, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Monday, at ten o'clock

*At the bottom of the first page: Madame Goussault*

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**Letter 183.** - According to Coste, the original autograph letter was in Marseilles at the house of the Daughters of Charity, 22 rue Vincent-Leblanc. This house was closed in 1979 and the present location of the letter is unknown.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written while Mademoiselle du Fay was still living (before 1636) and after the establishment of the Ladies of the Hôtel-Dieu (1634).

<sup>2</sup>Probably Anne de la Barre, the widow of François de Fortia, Councillor of the King and Master of Requests for the Hôtel-Dieu.

184. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[After 1631]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

This is Mademoiselle Brou,<sup>2</sup> the treasurer of Saint-Barthélemy.<sup>3</sup> Since I cannot have the pleasure of talking with her because I am in a hurry, I beg you to do so and to look upon her as a good servant of God, worthy of some good employment for His glory.

V. D.

185. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1634 or 1635]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Mademoiselle Poulaillon is asking for that good young woman. Please send her with Mademoiselle's footman. Will she be able to go on foot or, if it is convenient, would you lend her your little horse? The first way would be more edifying. It is nine leagues from here. If she cannot make it in one day, she may do the trip in

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**Letter 184.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Before this date, there was no Confraternity of Charity at Saint-Barthélemy. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXIII, p. 109.)

<sup>2</sup>Mademoiselle Brou was probably related to Madame de Brou, who was a member of the association of the Ladies of the Hôtel-Dieu. She called the Daughters of Charity to Bernay, where she supported them through her own generosity. Madame de Brou was a cousin of M. de Vincy.

<sup>3</sup>A parish in Paris.

**Letter 185.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Probable date of the death of Isabelle du Fay, whose serious illness Saint Vincent is here announcing to Saint Louise.



two. Please have her ready when the footman arrives. I beg Our Lord to bless the young woman.

Mademoiselle du Fay is seriously ill. I am not asking you to offer her to Our Lord; I am sure you will do so.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

Tuesday evening

I sent word to the footman to come tomorrow morning.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

186. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1634]<sup>1</sup>

I think, Mademoiselle, that it would be well to recall that young woman who is with Madame de Suivry and to send someone for her. In the meantime, we shall see about what has to be done. I am going to the collège<sup>2</sup> and shall try to see M. Le Gras. Good Sister Alix brought you one young woman and is talking about another. Did you keep the first one?

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.  
i.s.C.M.

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**Letter 186.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter seems to have been written in the early days of the Company of the Daughters of Charity.

<sup>2</sup>To the Collège des Bons-Enfants where Michel Le Gras was then living.

187. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

Your letter seems fine to me. The evil spirit is meddling in the spiritual assistance project for those poor women. M. Chenevis spoke to me about it again this morning and said that the Chevittaines are taking considerable umbrage at the plan. He also said that they do not belong to the community. Please get more information about it. The worst that can happen is that we may have to give up the idea. If that is the case, well and good. Nevertheless, we must quietly locate the source of the evil and see to the remedies.

I am going to see Madame Goussault, the President's wife. It did not seem to me that you were speaking to her too freely, as you say. Always be quite simple and sincere and ask God to grant me those two virtues.

I am, in His love. . . .

Saint-Lazare, October 29, 1634

188. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter, of October 8 I think, in which you informed me that Monsieur Le Bret told you that Dom Le Bret,<sup>1</sup> his cousin, wrote to him with regard to your return. Now I must tell you, before God, in Whose presence I am speaking, that I do not

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**Letter 187.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 33.

**Letter 188.** - Collection for the process of beatification.

<sup>1</sup>A Benedictine monk whose cousin, Jacques Le Bret, was an auditor of the Roman Rota and, later, Bishop of Toul.

know anything about it. I have not said a word to Dom Le Bret, to my knowledge, to give him any reason to write that or anything approaching it. Perhaps it is the result of someone from there telling him that you had no more to do in Rome and that you had said you were to leave in two weeks. All I know about the affair is what I am surmising here in telling you this, because that good Father did not tell me anything about what he wrote.

As for what you say he told you before, along the same lines, I tell you that, while I was speaking to that good Father about our affairs in Rome — for Monsieur Le Bret writes to him about everything that is done — while I was speaking, I repeat, about our stay in Ferrara, I expressed to him my worry about the situation, not telling him anything else than what I could say in your presence without giving you offense. It is true that that good Father, because of the zeal he has for us — which is such that I doubt strongly whether my own enthusiasm for the Mission is as great as his — told me that he wanted to write to his cousin to procure the Bulls in your absence. Now, since he said that to me quite simply, I did not pay much attention to it. But having thought it over, I went to see him expressly for the purpose of asking him not to do anything about it because I was afraid it might upset you and because I realized that it was proper for you to take care of it. Nevertheless, I found out later that he had written something about it and I was extremely annoyed.

That, Monsieur, is all I can say concerning the matter, with all the liberty and simplicity in my power. But do not feel that that good Father has any opinion of you except a very good one, thank God, one full of esteem and affection, and certainly with good reason.

That is why I most humbly entreat you not to give rise to any thought contrary to what I am telling you and to put far from you the thoughts, which I see from your letter, that you have formed with regard to me and that good Father. You know that the goodness of your heart has given me, thank God, the freedom to speak to you with full confidence, without concealing or disguising

anything. I think you have been aware of that up to now from my way of acting towards you.

*Jésus, mon Dieu!* could I be reduced to the misfortune of having to do or say something in your regard against holy simplicity! Oh! may God preserve me from that, Monsieur, with regard to anyone whomsoever! Simplicity is the virtue I love the most and to which, I think, I pay the most attention in my actions; and, if it is permissible for me to say so, I would say that I am practicing it with some progress by the mercy of God.

In the name of God, little Father, reject those thoughts as temptations that the evil spirit is putting into your mind. Believe that my heart is not so much mine as yours, and that you are more a pleasure and consolation to me than I am to myself. That is what makes me hope for your return. But I do not want you to come back in the depth of winter and in danger, but the way I wrote to you in my last letter, that is, around the month of February or March, unless you take passage on the galleys from France which are to bring the Cardinal of Lyons<sup>2</sup> to Rome. He is supposed to leave around Advent, in which case it would be good either to ask Monsieur Gilioli to come and meet you in Rome or to go and get him and wait for the galleys in Leghorn which is the seaport for Florence.

I am not saying anything to you about the Saint-Lazare affair because I have already written asking you to have the petition signed by the Pope so as to put matters in a state to be acted upon fifty years from now, as you wrote us. If the matter could be expedited at some small cost, you should attend to it.

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<sup>2</sup>Alphonse de Richelieu, brother of the Cardinal-Minister. He was going to Rome to help the ordinary Ambassador, François de Noailles, to obtain from the Pope the annulment of the marriage that Gaston d'Orléans had contracted with Marguerite de Lorraine. Negotiations took so long that the minister of Louis XIII became impatient and wrote on October 3, 1635: "It would be well for the King to send to Rome, as extraordinary ambassador, some important person who would by nature be more aggressive than M. de Noailles and the Cardinal of Lyons." (Cf. *Lettres, instructions diplomatiques et papiers d'Etat du cardinal de Richelieu* [8 vols., Paris: Avenel, 1853-1877], vol. IV, p. 307.)

Well now, Monsieur, here then is all I shall tell you for the present about myself except that I greet you with all the tenderness of my heart. Please take care of your health. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, November 6, 1634

*Addressed:* Monsieur du Coudray, Priest of the Mission, in Rome

188a. - TO M. DE MONTHOLON<sup>1</sup>

[December 1634]<sup>2</sup>

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am very sorry I did not have the happiness of being here when you did us the honor of coming; I was in a little village nearby. However, I returned a quarter of an hour after you left and found your brother. *Mon Dieu*, Monsieur, how much I feel the pain that he and the others are giving you. He told me his story,<sup>3</sup> and

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**Letter 188a.** - Autograph letter. The *Annales* (1957), pp. 674-681 published a photocopy of the original as printed in the Charavay catalogue (Autographs and Historical Documents, Sales of December 10 and 11, 1957). This edition of Coste uses the text published in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, pp. 12-13.

<sup>1</sup>Guy-François de Montholon, Seigneur du Vivier et d'Aubervilliers, was born in Paris in 1600. He became an advocate in the Parlement in 1618 and a State Councillor in 1645. He died in 1679.

<sup>2</sup>This date seems most probable since it marks the beginning of Jean de Montholon's incarceration at Saint-Lazare. Born in 1613, he was twenty-one years old at this time.

<sup>3</sup>The affair can be reconstructed in this fashion: On July 29, 1632, Jean de Montholon secretly married Jeanne Jeannesson whose social status his family considered beneath his own. As guardian of his brothers since their father's death in 1632, Guy-François, feeling that this was an improper alliance, had the marriage annulled by a decree of Parlement. Jean consulted the Sorbonne which declared the marriage valid (1633). Nevertheless, on September 28, 1634, Guy-François obtained a writ from the Provost of Paris authorizing him to have Jean im-

whatever I contrived to say to him about the fear I have that he has made a mistake, that he must trust you absolutely and follow the advice of your relatives, and even something about the family into which he is marrying, with whom I am acquainted,<sup>4</sup> I only stirred up his feelings more. I had asked his permission to come and see you with the Pastor of Saint-Germain,<sup>5</sup> but when I was at Saint-Merri,<sup>6</sup> I became greatly apprehensive that he might escape. I came back and found him resting. That is why I have taken the time to write and ask you to let me know how you wish me to act.

I am looking forward to the honor of seeing you tomorrow so that I may thank you, as I do most humbly, for the favorable beginning you have afforded our defense.<sup>7</sup> I have been informed by two of our counselors that you have worked wonders. I trust, Monsieur, that the conclusion will be even more favorable and that Our Lord is reserving a great recompense for you in Heaven. I am, in His love, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Monsieur de Montholon, advocate at the Court

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prisoned. He then had him incarcerated on December 5, 1634, in the Priory of Saint-Lazare, where places were reserved for wayward sons of noble families. He subsequently escaped (cf. no. 196).

<sup>4</sup>The parents of Jeanne Jeannesson were Seigneurs de Clichy-la-Garenne. It was there, no doubt, that Saint Vincent knew them when he was Pastor of that Parish.

<sup>5</sup>Probably Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, a parish in Paris.

<sup>6</sup>A parish in Paris.

<sup>7</sup>After the union of the Priory of Saint-Lazare with the Congregation of the Mission (1632), Saint Vincent had to overcome much difficult opposition, particularly before the Parlement. The support of individuals there was indispensable.

189. - TO JEAN DE FONTENEIL<sup>1</sup>

December 7, 1634

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

M. de la Salle has written me several times about the fondness Our Lord has given you for our modest way of life, for himself, and for M. Brunet, and about the ardor with which you work for the salvation of the poor, and for us when the occasions arise.<sup>2</sup> Now, for all that, Monsieur, I thank you most humbly and beg Our Lord Himself to be your thanks and reward and to shed upon you more and more abundantly His graces and blessings.

O Monsieur, how my heart is filled with consolation every time the above-mentioned M. de la Salle writes to me about your zeal for the salvation of souls, your diligence in winning them over, the blessing Our Lord is bestowing on you, and the solid virtue you possess! I assure you, Monsieur, all that gives me a joy I cannot express to you and a very special fidelity in asking God to be

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**Letter 189.** - Reg. I, f<sup>o</sup> 14 v<sup>o</sup>. The copyist notes that the original was in Saint Vincent's handwriting.

<sup>1</sup>Jean de Fonteneil, born in Bordeaux around 1605, was a friend and imitator of Saint Vincent. His outstanding qualities procured for him the highest positions in the diocese. He was appointed Canon of Saint-Seurin in July 1623; special archiepiscopal Vicar General on November 1, 1639; Vicar in perpetuity of the parish church of Sainte-Colombe, then of Saint-Siméon in Bordeaux; Grand Archdeacon; Chancellor of the University of Bordeaux in 1650; and Vicar General of the diocese on September 10, 1655. Like his friend Saint Vincent, he was convinced of the great good that would result from seminaries, missions, retreats, and weekly meetings of priests to discuss matters of theology, discipline, or piety. For this purpose, he founded the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Clergy, who directed the ordinands' seminary in Bordeaux and the seminaries of Aire and Sarlat. They were given the chapels of Notre-Dame-de-Montuzet, and the parishes of Saint-Louis-du-Marais and Saint-Simon-Cardonnat (Gironde). This Congregation was short-lived, surviving its founder by only three years. He died in Bordeaux, March 2, 1679. (Cf. Louis Bertrand, *Histoire des Séminaires de Bordeaux et de Bazas* [3 vols., Bordeaux: Féret, 1894], vol. I, pp. 207 ff.)

<sup>2</sup>Messieurs de la Salle and Brunet had only been working in the diocese of Bordeaux for a short time. The faculties for preaching and hearing confessions in the diocese had been given them the preceding October 21. (Ibid., p. 215.)

pleased to continue for you and to increase the same graces within you.

That, Monsieur, is the reward you may expect from us for the many, many acts of charity you incessantly perform for us there. I add to that the offering I am making to you, Monsieur, of the Little Company and its services, and my own in particular, with all the affection and humility of which I am capable. This gives me the confidence to recommend myself to your holy prayers. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL  
i.s.C.M.

190. - TO MONSIEUR BELIN

December 16, 1634

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The time has finally come when we are going to glean after the abundant harvest Our Lord has reaped through you in that part of the country. I beg you, Monsieur, to continue your charity towards the Company and to advise it of all that is expedient *in Domino*. You will see new faces on all sides, but what can you expect? That is how Providence subjects us to vicissitude.

I beg you to speak frankly and without reserve to M. Grenu and to any one of them with regard to the advice you feel it advisable to give them in your meetings; otherwise, both they and the most prudent men could make mistakes.

And if you can, will you kindly go to Saint-Nom<sup>1</sup> or to Les

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**Letter 190.** - Reg. I. f<sup>o</sup> 1 v<sup>o</sup>. The copyist notes that the original was in Saint Vincent's handwriting.

<sup>1</sup>Saint-Nom-La-Bretèche (Yvelines).



Clayes to teach catechism and hear confessions? Do so, I beg of you, and take your choice. Are you really unaware that Our Lord has made you a Missionary when it is you who have one of the greatest shares in the conception, gestation, birth and development of the Mission, and that, were it not for the clear signs God has given that He wanted you in Villepreux, you would belong to the Mission completely?

Good M. Pillé<sup>2</sup> is at the Bons-Enfants with a slight stomach ailment; M. Portail is having trouble with his eyes and I with my legs, but all three of us love you dearly with all our heart. Take care, Monsieur, in the name of Our Lord, to ask God to grant us the grace of doing His Will in all things. I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Please find a servant to bring in and to prepare the food at Saint-Nom; we shall pay him.

#### 191. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1640]<sup>1</sup>

. . . If you think it advisable to make a proposal to him about it, do so; if not, say nothing to him. I am sending Madame de Villegoubelin's<sup>2</sup> letter back to you; we shall discuss what is in it after your retreat. Well now, how are you doing? Are you bustling

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<sup>2</sup>Jean Pillé, a priest of the diocese of Sens, was received into the Congregation of the Mission around October 1631. He was Superior of the Collège des Bons-Enfants from 1635 to 1638 and died in Paris on October 7, 1642. Saint Vincent related his life and praised his virtues in a long Circular Letter which will be inserted further on (cf. vol II, no. 634). There is a copy of his will in the Arch. Nat. M 211, file 1.

**Letter 191.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter. The beginning of the letter has been cut off and lost.

<sup>1</sup>Since there is no certainty about the date of this letter, it can only be speculated that it was written before 1639. After 1639, Saint Vincent usually added the day of the week, e.g., "Tuesday morning," at the head of the letter.

<sup>2</sup>Saint Louise, while passing through Beauvais, lodged at her home.

around? In the name of God, act gently as you can picture our blessed Father, the Bishop of Geneva,<sup>3</sup> doing.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Tuesday morning

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

192. - JEAN DE LA SALLE AND JEAN-JOSEPH BRUNET  
TO SAINT VINCENT<sup>1</sup>

1634

The sermons are well attended in the diocese of Bordeaux. The faithful come from far away. They are so anxious to make a general confession that they wait their turn for weeks at a time without returning home and would rather die than lose this opportunity of making their peace with God. There are some who accuse themselves quite loudly so as to humble themselves more.

193. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1634 and 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

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<sup>3</sup>Saint Francis de Sales.

**Letter 192.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. I, sect. II, par. 8, 1st ed., p. 50.

<sup>1</sup>Abelly says that this letter was written by some Missionaries whom Saint Vincent sent out in 1634 "to work in the diocese of Bordeaux." We became acquainted with these Missionaries in no. 189.

**Letter 193.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written at some time between the institution of the Daughters of Charity and the death of Madame Goussault, September 20, 1639.

I talked to the wife of the Keeper of the Seals<sup>2</sup> about the Charity of the Daughters. She gave one hundred écus to Madame Goussault, the President's wife, which she will send you today; and what is more, she would like to go to the country with the rest of you.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

**194.** - TO CHARLES-CHRETIEN DE GOURNAY, BISHOP OF TOUL<sup>1</sup>

January 19, 1635

Saint Vincent asks Charles-Chrétien de Gournay, who had requested an appointment with him, to kindly wait a few days, because the following day he has to begin the visitation of the Sisters of the Madeleine which he will be continuing for at least a week. Moreover, the following Sunday, the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, he is expected in Montreuil where he is supposed to preach and ascertain the smooth functioning of the confraternity established in that place.

**195.** - TO N.

[Around 1635]<sup>1</sup>

I fell seriously ill two or three days ago, which has made me think about death. By the grace of God, I adore His Will and

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<sup>2</sup>Madame Séguier.

**Letter 194.** - Collet, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 355, summary drawn from the original letter found in Toul.

<sup>1</sup>Appointed Bishop in 1634; died in Nancy, September 14, 1637.

**Letter 195.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. II, p. 252.

<sup>1</sup>Abelly says that this letter fragment was written by the Saint more than twenty-five years before his death, which occurred, as we know, September 27, 1660.

acquiesce in it with all my heart. And on examining myself as to what might cause me some anxiety, I found nothing except that we have not yet drawn up our rules.<sup>2</sup>

196. - TO GUY-FRANCOIS DE MONTHOLON

[1635, after March 28]<sup>1</sup>

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I shall tell you, with very great sorrow, that I am unworthy of the honor of your benevolence because I was unable to watch over your brother.<sup>2</sup> He escaped this evening through a little out-of-the-way door which is used by our leper,<sup>3</sup> while I was talking to your clerk whom you had sent to see me about a letter I had written you. I and M. de Saint Lou . . . in, who had come to see me, had just left him in the garden with one of the religious from the house.<sup>4</sup> All I did was accompany my visitor to the door where they

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<sup>2</sup>Saint Vincent did not begin to prepare them until 1642.

**Letter 196.** - *Bulletin du Bibliophile et du Bibliothécaire*, 1872, p. 382. The original, which we have been unable to examine, is the property of the De Montholon family; it is in Quevillon, near Rouen, in the Château de la Rivière-Bourdot.

<sup>1</sup>On March 28, 1635, Lambert aux Couteaux informed Guy-François de Montholon that for two days his brother had been in a state akin to madness. (*Archives du Prince de Montholon de Umbriano. Inventaire des Titres de la maison de Montholon* [1200-1900], Paris, 1901, no. 490.)

<sup>2</sup>Because he had, on July 29, 1632, secretly married Jeanne Jeannesson, whose social rank did not equal his own, Jean de Montholon had been arrested on December 5, 1634. He had been imprisoned at Saint-Lazare at the request of his brother and tutor, Guy-François, after being sentenced by the court of Paris. At the time of his incarceration, he was twenty-one years old. (*Archives du Prince de Montholon de Umbriano*, nos. 480 and 483.)

<sup>3</sup>Saint-Lazare was a former leper hospital. In the agreement concluded January 7, 1632, between Saint Vincent and the former religious of Saint-Lazare, it is stated that the house was not sheltering any lepers at that time. The Saint committed himself to receive and lodge free of charge any lepers who might present themselves. As far as we know, this letter is the only document that indicates the presence of a leper at Saint-Lazare after 1632. In his petition to Pope Urban VIII in 1634 (cf. no. 178), Saint Vincent noted that for a long time there had been no lepers in the Priory.

<sup>4</sup>A religious of the old Saint-Lazare.

told me your clerk was asking for me. I was scarcely with him when someone came to me and said: "That gentleman is running away!" Immediately I went to the garden and from there to the little door by which I was told he had just left and that he was with one of the religious from the house who, I would imagine, had shown him the way to escape. We have no one capable of chasing after him, and besides, the soldiers would most certainly have assisted him.<sup>5</sup>

I cannot tell you, Monsieur, how distressed I am about this, especially since it is the first favor you had asked of me. How upsetting such poor service is to me, only God knows, and were it not for my hope that your goodness will pardon me and that you will make use of this occurrence to guard him better, I do not know who would be able to console me. So, once again I have recourse to your goodness, Monsieur, and beg you by the love of Our Lord to try to forgive me. Hoping this from your goodness, I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Monsieur, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, Saturday evening<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>The prison of Saint-Lazare took in the insane and incorrigibles. When Saint Vincent took possession of the Priory, it had only two or three poor people who were mentally ill. Their number increased later on. The good Saint watched over them with the affection of a father. One day, when he was threatened with eviction from Saint-Lazare by greedy competitors, he asked himself what would cost him the most at his departure, and his thoughts immediately turned to the poor mental patients entrusted to his care. "At that moment it seemed to me," he said in a conference, "that it would be not to see those poor people any longer and to be obliged to give up their care and service." (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. VI, pp. 305 ff.) The only list we still have of the inmates dates from 1692 to 1734. (Arch. Nat. MM 543.) More than one illustrious name is found there.

<sup>6</sup>Later, Jean de Montholon legally married Jeanne Jeannesson. He served in the army, became Seigneur des Bordes-Cocherets in 1640, and in 1647 married his second wife, Demoiselle Louise de Chesneton. (*Archives du Prince de Montholon de Umbriano*, nos. 551, 568, and 605.)

197. - TO ANTOINE PORTAIL

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have received two letters from you since you left, three in fact: one from Brie-Comte-Robert,<sup>1</sup> the other from Lion, and the last one the day after Quasimodo<sup>2</sup> from Luzarches,<sup>3</sup> your first mission. I did not answer your first one because I did not receive it until a week or so later, and I thought my letter would not find you in Lion; I did not answer the second either because I did not think it expedient. So here is my answer to all three.

Let me tell you then, with regard to the first, that I do not think you need any other authorization than the one I gave you; as for the second, how I praise God for what you told me in that little note.

Let us talk about the third. To be sure, Monsieur, it consoled me more than I can tell you because of the blessing God has been pleased to give to your simple catechism lessons, and Monsieur Lucas' sermons, which you tell me are good, and to everything that followed from them. O Monsieur, how good it was for you to have been humbled, first of all because, ordinarily, progress does not come about any other way, and because that is the way Our Lord prepares those whom he wishes to use profitably! And how many times was He Himself humiliated from the very outset of

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**Letter 197.** - Collection for the process of beatification.

<sup>1</sup>Principal town of a canton in Seine-et-Marne. This locality had already received a visit from the Missionaries and from Saint Vincent himself. It had had its Confraternity of Charity for four years. Thanks to a foundation established by the Commander de Sillery, a mission was given there every five years.

<sup>2</sup>Quasimodo Sunday, the first Sunday after Easter. In 1635, it would have been April 16.

<sup>3</sup>Principal town of a canton in Val-d'Oise.

His mission! Just as *extrema gaudii luctus occupat*,<sup>4</sup> so is it said to those who labor in anguish and under pressure that *tristitia eorum vertetur in gaudium*.<sup>5</sup> Let us love the latter and fear the former. And, in the name of God, Monsieur, I beg you to enter into these sentiments, and Monsieur Lucas as well, not to claim anything from your work but shame, ignominy, and ultimately death, if it so please God. Must not a priest die of shame for claiming a reputation in the service he gives to God and for dying in his bed, when he sees Jesus Christ rewarded for his work by disgrace and the gibbet. Remember, Monsieur, we live in Jesus Christ through the death of Jesus Christ, and we must die in Jesus Christ through the life of Jesus Christ, and our life must be hidden in Jesus Christ and filled with Jesus Christ, and in order to die as Jesus Christ, we must live as Jesus Christ. Now, once these foundations have been laid, let us give ourselves up to contempt, to shame, to ignominy, and let us disclaim the honors people pay us, the good reputation and the applause they give us, and let us do nothing which has not that end in view.

Let us work humbly and respectfully. Let us not challenge the ministers in the pulpit; let us not say, unless it be rarely and in a spirit of humility and compassion, that they could not point out any passage in Holy Scripture concerning their articles of faith; for otherwise God will not bless our work. We shall drive the poor away from us. They will judge that there was vanity in our behavior, and will not believe us. We do not believe a man because he is very learned but because we consider him good and love him. The devil is very learned and yet we believe nothing he says, because we do not love him. Our Lord had to predispose with His love those whom He wished to have believe in Him. Do what we will,

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<sup>4</sup>*Sorrow takes over after joy.* Prov. 14:13. "Even in laughter the heart may be sad, and the end of joy may be sorrow." (NAB)

<sup>5</sup>*Their sadness will be turned into joy.* Jn. 16:20. "I tell you truly: you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices; you will grieve for a time, but your grief will be turned into joy." (NAB)

people will never believe in us if we do not show love and compassion to those whom we wish to believe in us. Monsieur Lambert and Monsieur Soufliers, because they acted that way, were considered saints by both sides, and Our Lord did great things through them. If you act in that manner, God will bless your labors; if not, you will produce noise and fanfare, but little fruit. I am not telling you this, Monsieur, because I have heard that you have done the evil of which I speak, but so that you may refrain from it and labor constantly and humbly in a spirit of humility.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, let Monsieur Lucas continue the sermons, and you the catechism lessons.

I greatly doubt that Monsieur Olier<sup>7</sup> and Perrochel<sup>8</sup> will come to see you. The first had already left and the other was supposed to follow him a few days later. But Monsieur Olier was detained by the urgent proposal made to him by the Bishop of Langres<sup>9</sup> that he

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<sup>6</sup>Saint Vincent knew that Antoine Lucas, Antoine Portail's companion, was of an ardent temperament and given to controversy, for which he was naturally gifted.

<sup>7</sup>M. Olier regretted not having gone to the help of the two priests of the Mission. He was so upset by this that it almost jeopardized his health. For two years he suffered remorse, constant scruples accompanied by "aridity and great darkness," tears, and sighs. (Cf. Faillon, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 158, 180, 181.)

<sup>8</sup>François Perrochel, born in Paris, October 18, 1602, was M. Olier's cousin. He was one of the pious and zealous priests who gathered around Saint Vincent to be animated by his spirit and to work under his direction. He gave missions in several places, especially in Auvergne, in Joigny, and in the faubourg Saint-Germain. He was a member of the Tuesday Conferences and was present at the meetings in which the retreats for ordinands were organized. As Bishop-elect of Boulogne, he was invited to give the conferences for the ordinands at the Bons-Enfants and was so successful that the Queen wished to hear him. Moved by his words, she left generous alms for the Saint to help him defray a part of the expenses incurred by the retreats. François Perrochel was consecrated in the church of Saint-Lazare on June 11, 1645. The episcopate of this holy prelate was one of the most fruitful and glorious known to the diocese of Boulogne. When, worn out by age and infirmity, the Bishop of Boulogne saw that he could not govern his diocese properly, he resigned; this was in 1675. He crowned his career on April 8, 1682, by a death worthy of his life. (Cf. Van Drival, *Histoire des évêques de Boulogne* [Boulogne-sur-Mer: Berger frères, 1852].)

<sup>9</sup>Sébastien Zamet, the son of Sébastien Zamet and Madeleine Le Clerc du Tremblay, was born in Paris in 1588. He was consecrated Bishop of Langres in 1615, and died in his château in Mussy on February 2, 1655. Abbé L. N. Prunel published his life (*Sébastien Zamet évêque—duc de Langres, pair de France* [Paris: Picard, 1912]) and his spiritual letters (*Lettres spirituelles de Sébastien Zamet précédées des Avis spirituels* [Paris: Picard, 1912]).



take over his bishopric. They are negotiating the matter. The affair is still doubtful because of the conditions. It seems more likely that the matter will be arranged than not.<sup>10</sup> The above-mentioned Monsieur Olier will perhaps still make a short trip as far as Pébrac to farm out his lease. If Monsieur Perrochel had some companion, perhaps he would not fail to come to see you. We shall see. In the meantime, please write to me often and let me know to whom I should address my letter in Mende.

This evening I sent Monsieur Lucas' letter to Monsieur Tinien, and to Monsieur Olier the one for him, because I received yours just this morning.

What news shall I give you about us? Everyone is well, thank God. Since your departure we have admitted a Limousin gentleman who was a Protestant — a relative of Monsieur de Saint-Angel — and a student from Auvergne;<sup>11</sup> but, on the other hand, we led Monsieur Flahan to acknowledge that he would do better somewhere else rather than here. He just left about an hour ago. I think that we shall also admit a cousin of Monsieur Meyster;<sup>12</sup> he

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<sup>10</sup>This letter is the only document that mentions the offer of the Bishop of Langres to Jean-Jacques Olier. Its discovery put an end to the conjectures of the biographers of the founder of Saint-Sulpice. (Cf. Frédéric Monier, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 128, n. 3.)

<sup>11</sup>Annet Savinier, born near Clermont, in Auvergne, was received into the Congregation of the Mission in Paris in 1635 and ordained a priest in March 1637.

<sup>12</sup>Etienne Meyster was one of the greatest missionaries of the seventeenth century. M. du Ferrier said that he was "the top man in the world as far as missions were concerned," and Father de Condren, that "he was a man to confront the anti-Christ." He was born in Ath, Belgium, in the former diocese of Cambrai. The reputation of Saint Vincent de Paul attracted him and he entered the Congregation of the Mission at the end of 1634 after receiving the subdiaconate. He was ordained a priest in 1635, and left Saint Vincent in 1636 to join Jean-Jacques Olier and to place himself under the direction of Father de Condren. He preached very successfully in various places. The mission given in Amiens was especially famous. He had acquired so much influence over the people, it was said, that he could have turned the city over to the Spanish. Father de Condren wrote one day to M. Olier: "We should venerate him and humble ourselves because we are not worthy of the grace God is granting him. . . . It seems to me that I recognize and honor in him something of the apostolic grace in which I beg Our Lord to give us some share." And further on, he added: "He must not serve as a rule for others." Indeed M. Meyster was not walking along the usual paths. His judgement did not equal his great talent. "He did not have too much common sense and was a real dreamer," wrote Father Rapin (*Mémoires du P. René Rapin* [3 vols., Lyons: E. Vitte, n.d.], vol. I, p. 50). He was suddenly struck with mental illness in Metz right in the middle of a sermon that he was

was formerly Brother Etienne.<sup>13</sup> Monsieur de la Salle is receiving a great deal of help from God on his mission;<sup>14</sup> so are those who are in Normandy. Some men are about to leave for two or three places in the diocese of Chartres and for two in this diocese. I have told M. du Coudray to come back with Monsieur Gilioli.<sup>15</sup>

And there you have all our news. I have not yet read your letter to the Company; I shall do so tomorrow, with God's help. In His love I greet and affectionately embrace good Monsieur Lucas and you as well, Monsieur, without forgetting good Brother Philippe or the simplicity with which I have spoken to you and am, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, May 1, 1635

*Addressed:* Monsieur Portail

198. - TO ANTOINE LUCAS

June 28, 1635

The Saint gently reprimands Antoine Lucas for his conduct towards heretics, whom he treats scornfully and provokes to dispute.

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preaching outdoors under a burning sun. He ended his days in a wretched state shortly afterwards. Rather numerous bits of information concerning Meyster are to be found in Faillon, *op. cit.* (cf. *Récit véritable de la mort de M. Meyster*, Bibl. Nat. fr. 22.445, f. 161). Saint Vincent stated in his letter that one of M. Meyster's cousins was seeking admission to the Congregation of the Mission; he was Charles Aulent, born February 1, 1614, in Ath, received among the Missionaries at the end of 1636, ordained a priest in 1640, and admitted to vows December 11, 1644.

<sup>13</sup>It was a custom in the Congregation of the Mission to call the clerics Brother and to reserve the title Monsieur for the priests. When M. Portail left Saint-Lazare to give missions, Etienne Meyster was not yet a priest; he was usually called Brother Etienne. Since his ordination, which had taken place a few days before, he had become M. Meyster.

<sup>14</sup>Jean de la Salle and Jean Brunet were giving missions in the area of Bordeaux.

<sup>15</sup>Both were in Rome or perhaps on their way back to Paris.

**Letter 198.** - Collet, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 247.

198a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

1635<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Since my slight fever goes on, I decided to go on with your advice which is to do as I did in the past for it, enjoy some country air. I am going to try, therefore, to visit a few Charities and perhaps, if I feel well, I shall go as far as Liancourt<sup>2</sup> and Montmorency<sup>3</sup> to begin what you will be able to complete later. But strengthen yourself in the meantime, I beg of you. I promise to do the same on my part. I send my regards and am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble [servant].<sup>4</sup>

VINCENT DEPAUL

Tuesday, at one o'clock

198b. - TO SAINT LOUISE

1635<sup>1</sup>

Yesterday I received your letter, which touched me a little when I learned from it of the slight indisposition which obliged you to

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**Letter 198a.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), a copy made from the original in the possession of M. Corregio of Saint-Colombe (Loire). The original is in the Saint's own handwriting.

<sup>1</sup>While Coste originally assigned 1633 or 1634 for the date of this letter, he states in a footnote in vol. XIV, p. 631, that this letter belongs, without any doubt, to the year 1635. In this edition it has been placed in correct chronological order and has been renumbered no. 198a.

<sup>2</sup>A locality in Oise, renowned in the seventeenth century for the magnificent château of the Duc de Liancourt. The Duc and Duchesse founded an establishment of the Daughters of Charity there and a seminary which Adrien Bourdoise personally directed for several years.

<sup>3</sup>A large commune in Val-d'Oise, formerly celebrated for its château, its park, and "the Hermitage," the residence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

<sup>4</sup>The copy has "principal," a title to which the Saint had the right but which he does not use in any of his letters. Without doubt, the copyist misread this word.

**Letter 198b.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 35.

<sup>1</sup>Coste originally assigned 1634 as the date for this letter, previously no. 168, and also for

go to bed on your arrival. I beg God, Mademoiselle, to strengthen you so that you can serve Him in the work for which He is sending you.

Here are your rules from Saint-Nicolas and Saint-Sauveur,<sup>2</sup> but please use in Beauvais the ones from that locality and try to put into practice there as elsewhere the things that are not being done.

### 198c. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I did tell you, Mademoiselle, that you would find great difficulties in the Beauvais affair. Blessed be God that you have made such favorable progress! When I set up the Charity in Mâcon,<sup>1</sup> everyone made fun of me and would point at me in the streets, but

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nos. 169-170, 171, 172, 173 and 174 (now nos. 198c-g). In his corrections and additions listed in vol. XIII, he assigned 1635 as the date for these letters. Finding the original of letter no. 198c, which bears an exact date, enabled him to make this correction. It seems likely that Saint Louise received these letters in the course of her journey in the diocese of Beauvais, April-July 1635.

<sup>2</sup>Rules for the Confraternity of Charity for each of these parishes (cf. vol. XIII, nos. 140 and 141). Saint Vincent had devised a general rule for the Confraternity of Charity and would then adapt it to meet the specific needs of a particular parish or locality.

**Letter 198c.** - According to Coste, the original autograph letter was held by the Fathers of the Company of Jesus in Aix. The present location of the letter is unknown. This letter was published by Coste as two separate letters, nos. 169 and 170 (vol. I, pp. 239-241), taken from the Saint Paul manuscript, p. 35. He later published the original letter (vol. XIII, pp. 833-835), which added a number of paragraphs to those appearing in vol. I. This original letter had an exact date, which necessitated the changing of dates on other letters (nos. 198a-g) and the repositioning of these letters chronologically.

<sup>1</sup>It was around 1621 that the Saint was passing through Mâcon and was struck by the great number of poor. He realized that their spiritual poverty was far greater than their material poverty. There was some good to be done so he stopped there. The men and women of the well-to-do class, responding to his appeal, formed two distinct confraternities. To the men he entrusted the assistance of the poor; to the women, the care of the sick. The Bishop, the Canons, and the Lieutenant General helped him as best they could. Rules were drawn up (cf. vol. XIII, nos. 133-135) and put into practice. The Saint contributed the first alms and then withdrew, acclaimed by the gratitude of all. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XV, pp. 61 ff.)

when the deed was accomplished, everyone wept for joy. The town magistrates paid me so much honor on my departure, that not being able to stand it, I was compelled to leave in secret to avoid the applause; and that is now one of the best established Charities. I hope the embarrassment you had to suffer at the beginning will be changed into consolation and that the work will be more stable because of it.

I approve of your suggestion to set up the confraternity and to arrange it like the others in the diocese and for that reason I sent your letter to the Bishop of Beauvais<sup>2</sup> this morning. He is leaving this very day and could be in Beauvais on Saturday. Speak to him about the matter and be sure to take care of the little bit of health that you have. I am very much afraid that your great weariness may incapacitate you.

M. Durot,<sup>3</sup> who left the day before yesterday, told me that he was hoping the Ladies of Basse-Oeuvre would be able to attend to Sainte-Marguerite. See who can do so more conveniently, either they or the Ladies from Saint-Martin.

Yesterday I saw your son conversing very seriously with an old Jesuit Father, but I was not able to speak to him. I do not know how that happened; perhaps he did not see me and left while I went into a chapel. He is in good health.

Mademoiselle Poulaillon is leaving today for Villers. As you are in Liancourt, if you write to her or choose to go and rest at her home in Villers, she will be quite pleased and happy to do whatever you wish. Villers is only two or three leagues from Liancourt; it is near Saint-Leu. She has visited Montreuil. I am sending you her letter to entertain you a little.

I feel urged by the alms from the wife of the Keeper of the

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<sup>2</sup>Augustin Potier.

<sup>3</sup>Perhaps Nicolas Durot. Born in Oisemont (Somme), Durot was received into the Congregation of the Mission in August 1633 and ordained a priest in December 1636. In 1639, he was preaching around Toulouse. In August 1640, we find him in Paris. He returned to Richelieu in 1642, left the Congregation in 1645, and, thanks to Saint Vincent, was made Canon of Saint-Martin in Angers.

Seals<sup>4</sup> to do what can be done to set up the Charity in Saint-Laurent,<sup>5</sup> but I shall wait until you are here to work on it.

I sent your letter to Mademoiselle Guérin and I saw Marguerite<sup>6</sup> from Saint-Paul. She is finding the burden of that parish unbearable because of its great size, the large number of sick, and the fact that the Ladies do not make their visits.

I greet with all my heart and am the most humble servant of Madame de Villegoubelin, your good and charitable hostess, whom Providence led to Beauvais for the express purpose of doing the good she is doing there. Oh! how I wish her better health and a very long and happy life!

Take care of your own health, Mademoiselle, I repeat it once again, I who am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, July 21, 1635

198d. - TO SAINT LOUISE

1635

Thank you for the information you so kindly gave me about the condition of the Charity in Beauvais. The Bishop of Beauvais is supposed to go there to give a mission in October. Perhaps at that time we shall be able to prevail upon more people to take a hand in the Charity. The above-mentioned Bishop of Beauvais is leaving to give the mission in Liancourt; perhaps you will be there before him; however, do not hurry for the sake of avoiding him. Follow

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<sup>4</sup>Madame Séguier.

<sup>5</sup>The name of the parish in which the house of Saint-Lazare was located.

<sup>6</sup>A Daughter of Charity.

the order of Providence. Oh! how good it is to let ourselves be guided by it!

Take good care of your health and spare nothing in order to eat properly during your hard work. I still think that you do not eat enough.

I beg you to remember me very affectionately to good Mademoiselle du Coudray and all the good sisters<sup>1</sup> of the Charity in Bulles,<sup>2</sup> not forgetting good Mademoiselle Toinette in Clermont, if time allows you to see her.

198e. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LIANCOURT

1635

I am really astonished, Mademoiselle, that you did not receive two of my letters. I gave one to the Theologian of Beauvais and sent him the other, so that he would deliver them to you personally. Now, he told me that he had sent you the first one; as for the second, he said that you had already left for Bulles<sup>1</sup> and that he would try to send it to you. Indeed, I cannot help thinking I do not know what! Ah well, it is nothing — we must bow to all encounters with Providence.

With regard to Gournay,<sup>2</sup> if the president<sup>3</sup> is there, which I do not nor cannot know, it is too late to send someone there. I say, therefore, that in the event she is there, she will need at least two days. Please give her as much time as you think advisable.

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<sup>1</sup>Saint Vincent referred to the women who made up the Confraternity of Charity as *sisters*. The context determines whether he is referring to a Lady of Charity or a Daughter of Charity.

<sup>2</sup>In Oise.

**Letter 198e.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>In Oise.

<sup>2</sup>Gournay-sur-Aronde (Oise). René de Marillac, Saint Louise's first cousin, had married Marie de Creil, the daughter of the Seigneur de Gournay.

<sup>3</sup>Probably the president of the Charity.

Monsieur de la Salle saw the woman whom Madame de Longueville<sup>4</sup> has had locked up in Creil according to the wish of Madame de Liancourt.<sup>5</sup> Please tell the aforesaid lady that he could obtain no reparation from the woman except that she will do anything they want, as long as she has her freedom and that she will not fall into evil ways again. With regard to those kept in confinement, the above-mentioned Monsieur de la Salle feels that she will never agree to that.

I send my humble greetings to the above-mentioned lady and am her servant.

I received the letter and the keys that Madame de Longueville sent me.

As for the difficulty you have had and which you mention at the end of your letter, we shall talk about it.

My greetings to Mademoiselle Poulaillon.

Madame Goussault, the wife of the President, returned two days ago.

I am your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Liancourt

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<sup>4</sup>Louise de Bourbon, the sister of the last Comte de Soissons and the wife of Henri II, Duc de Longueville. She died September 9, 1637, leaving one daughter, Marie d'Orléans, Demoiselle de Longueville.

<sup>5</sup>Jeanne de Schomberg, the daughter of Marshal Henri de Schomberg and the wife of Roger de Liancourt du Plessis, was a pious and talented woman. We have a booklet of hers entitled: *Règlement donné par une dame de haute qualité à Madame\* \* \** [the princess of Marsillac], her granddaughter, edited by Abbé Jean-Jacques Boileau, Paris, 1698. The Château de Liancourt was famous for its beautiful gardens and admirable fountains. It was truly a princely residence and well-known to high society. More than once the Duchesse de Liancourt had received Saint Louise there. She used to call her, her dear friend. She helped Saint Louise considerably in her charitable works, encouraged the zeal of Adrien Bourdoise, and took under her patronage the Daughters of Providence. Pascal, Arnauld, and Le Maistre de Sacy finally succeeded in completely winning over to Jansenism both her husband and herself. She died in the Château de Liancourt on June 14, 1674, at the age of seventy-four. Abbé Boileau wrote her biography at the beginning of the above-mentioned booklet. A sketch of her life is also found in the Jansenist work of Abbé Leclerc, *Vies intéressantes et édifiantes de religieuses du Port-Royal et de plusieurs personnes qui leur étaient attachées*, 1750-1752, 4 vols., vol. I, pp. 411 ff.



198f. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LIANCOURT

1635

Blessed be God, Mademoiselle, for the blessing he bestowed on you in Beauvais and in Bulles and may His Goodness be pleased to continue to bless you where you are now.

The suggestion concerning the establishment of the Charity seems good to me but I fear that the house may ruin it.<sup>1</sup> Before long, the sisters of the Charity will withdraw from the responsibility of going to visit the sick in their homes and will be content to bring the food to the Hôtel-Dieu. The nurses will make a contribution to the food in order to rid themselves of the same bother so that, with both groups contributing to such a disorder, it will soon come about. The experience we are having in Joigny gives me good reason to fear this.

What can be done for the present is to found the establishment and to try to find some young women. I would approve of your leaving Marie there to begin with, were it not that you need her. If Madame<sup>2</sup> could give you someone suitable for this, or Mademoiselle Pavillon, then you could leave her there and train here the young women Madame is able to give you, or the sister of the schoolboy whom the nurses at Saint-Nicolas are supporting. She came to see me and offered to come whenever she is needed. She seems to me to be a fine young woman.

I shall send you Monsieur de la Salle who will be arriving in Liancourt Saturday evening or Sunday morning. Meanwhile, discuss with Madame what will be best, but you must not forget to get permission from the Bishop of Beauvais for the establishment, if he has not already given it. If he has told Madame that he has no objection, that suffices. If Madame does not have this permission

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**Letter 198f.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The Duchesse de Liancourt was insisting that there be a house for common use in which food and medicine would be distributed. Home visiting would have suffered from this.

<sup>2</sup>The Duchesse de Liancourt.

and writes to the Bishop of Beauvais and he chooses to send Monsieur Duchesne<sup>3</sup> to do the preaching on Sunday, M. de la Salle will take care of the rest and the preaching as well in the event that Monsieur Duchesne has started his treatments. But because M. de la Salle has some kind of sciatica in his thigh which prevents him from walking, Madame will please be so kind as to send a horse here for him by tomorrow evening.

As for what remains to be done in Beauvais, I think you will have to go there again, and while you are there, ask the Theologian for the letter I wrote to you at his address last Sunday, if he has not sent it to you. That is all I have to say to you for the present except that M. de la Salle will bring you news of your son.

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. D.

Saint-Lazare, Friday, at two o'clock

**198g. - TO SAINT LOUISE**

1635

Mademoiselle,

I am apprehensive about the house<sup>1</sup> if Madame is putting those young women<sup>2</sup> there now. In a short time she will think it advisable for her to have the sick brought there. The season is scarcely opportune for establishing the Charity in several places. If the Duchesse is not satisfied with Liancourt for the present, I think it unwise for her to make establishments anywhere except in two or three neighboring villages only.

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<sup>3</sup>Jérôme Duchesne, the Archdeacon of Beauvais.

**Letter 198g.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>See the preceding letter, note 1.

<sup>2</sup>The volunteers who were to assist the Ladies in their works of charity.

The Bishop of Beauvais wants us to discuss thoroughly the union of the Charity with the Rosary<sup>3</sup> throughout his diocese. Then Madame will be able to establish and combine the Rosary and the Charity in accordance with what has been decided. The aforesaid Bishop has asked me to send him my opinion and, in the meantime, he will discuss the matter with the Prior of the Jacobins.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps we shall have to get together about this because the Fathers of that city are objecting to it.

All things considered, I think that it is not advisable for you to return to Beauvais at present. When you have finished in Liancourt and, if necessary, in Gournay — as Mademoiselle Poulaillon may invite you there — if you see fit, a little rest will be needed. When you are here, we shall work on the rules for Beauvais. I even think it is unwise to draw up the ones for Liancourt right now because of that house and those young women, but send them the general set of rules unsigned, for experience will perhaps show that something should be added or curtailed. Since Our Lord has given the law of grace to man without writing it, let us do the same here for a time. I am, meanwhile, your servant.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

**199. - TO SAINT LOUISE**

(Now 207a.)

**200. - TO SAINT LOUISE**

(Now 207b.)

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<sup>3</sup>The Confraternity of the Rosary was widespread in the towns and villages at that time. Saint Vincent had established it in Clichy when he was Pastor there. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. VI, end, p. 27.)

<sup>4</sup>The Dominicans, the directors of the Confraternity of the Rosary, were not generally in favor of associating this confraternity with any others.

201. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 207c.)

202. - TO ANTOINE PORTAIL, IN THE CEVENNES

August 10, 1635

Please tell our Brother Philippe that I am very happy to learn that he is so zealous in instructing the poor people insofar as he is able. And indeed, Monsieur, it is true that what you wrote me about him has greatly consoled me, especially what you told me about having sent him to a little village where he saw a shepherd high up on a mountain and went up to visit and catechize him. Now then, may God be blessed since it can be said that: *Idiotae rapiunt caelum!*<sup>1</sup>

What can I tell you about us? At present, almost the entire Company is gathered together here. We are going to make our retreat and then start practicing controversies and preaching again. As for the younger members, perhaps we shall have them read the Master of the Sentences.<sup>2</sup>

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**Letter 202.** - Reg. 2, p. 196. The copyist notes that the original was in Saint Vincent's own handwriting.

<sup>1</sup>*The ignorant are seizing heaven.* It appears that Saint Vincent has taken a term found in various places in the New Testament — the ignorant, the uninstructed, the uninitiated — and combined it with the thought contained in Mt. 11:12 - “. . . the kingdom of God has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.” (NAB)

<sup>2</sup>*Sententiarum libri IV*, a work of the renowned Peter Lombard, Bishop of Paris.

203. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1635]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I really think it advisable to begin telling that young woman from the Hôtel-Dieu about her fastidiousness and elegance. But how will you broach the subject? Making her change her manner of dressing seems to me neither feasible nor expedient. I think it would be well to rid her of the desire of appearing well dressed and for her to be a little less careful about herself in that regard. You will see to it.

As for the Hôtel-Dieu, it is not expedient to be there all the time, but it is advisable to come and go. Do not be afraid of undertaking too much of what you can do without coming and going; but fear only the thought of doing more than you are doing and more than God is giving you the means to do. Offer yourself to His Divine Majesty never to do anything except what you are doing. Any idea to the contrary makes me tremble with fear because it seems to me a crime for children of Providence. I praise His Divine Goodness that you relieved me of that worry yesterday. I shall see your Daughters individually and then all together, and you can tell me whatever you want as soon as I am able to come.

Do not worry about that long trip. It seems to me that there is less chance of it. Perhaps I shall be able to take one for just three or four days to go to see two farms twelve leagues from here<sup>2</sup>

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**Letter 203.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Reference to the farms in this letter prompts us to assign this date.

<sup>2</sup>The contract is dated July 23, 1635. Madame de Herse was giving two farms to the house of Saint-Lazare: one in Mespuits, the other in Fréneville, a little village in the commune of Valpuiseaux (Essonne). In return, she asked that a mission be given in perpetuity on her estates every five years, and that two Missionaries be placed at her disposal or that of her second son, Félix Vialart, the Prior of Bu. These priests were to work in the localities indicated to them for three months every four years.

which good Madame de Herse, the President's wife,<sup>3</sup> let us have. In the meantime, pray to God for me.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

204. - TO JEAN DE FONTENEIL

August 29, 1635

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I cannot express to you, Monsieur, how conscious Our Lord makes me of the infinite number of obligations I have towards you for such great affection as you have shown to Messieurs de la Salle and Brunet and for such great assistance as you have given them in all the business matters we have had there.

I am also overwhelmed by the charity you have extended and keep on extending to my poor brother.<sup>1</sup> Because you have done all

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<sup>3</sup>Madame de Herse, née Charlotte de Ligny, was the daughter of Jean de Ligny, the Seigneur de Ranticey, Master of Requests. She was also the mother of Félix Vialart, the Bishop of Châlons, as well as a relative of Jean-Jacques Olier. Her late husband was 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. He died in Soleure, October 26, 1634. Madame de Herse was dear to Saint Francis de Sales, who had consented to being her son's godfather. She enrolled in the company of the Ladies of Charity and became one of Saint Vincent's chief auxiliaries. She gave a great deal to the poor of Paris, Picardy, and Champagne, generously supported the works for ordinands and for abandoned children, and established the Daughters of Charity in Chars (Val-d'Oise). During the wars that ravaged the capital, the Queen Mother entrusted to Madame de Herse and some other ladies the distribution of her personal alms. Madame de Herse died in 1662.

**Letter 204.** - Reg. I, f<sup>o</sup> 5. The copyist notes that the original was in Saint Vincent's own handwriting.

<sup>1</sup>Either Bernard, Saint Vincent's older brother (the oldest, Jean, had died before 1626), or Gayon, younger than the Saint.

this for the love of God, and because gratitude for so many kindnesses is beyond our power, I beg Our Lord, Monsieur, to be Himself both your thanks and your reward. I assure you that there will never be a day in my life on which I do not preserve the memory of your kindness and seek opportunities to honor and serve you. Look upon us then from now on, Monsieur, as men over whom you have acquired an absolute and sovereign power, and make use of us accordingly. Grant us also the favor, in the name of Our Lord, of using our house when you come to this city in the fall.

If, in the meantime, you wish us to send back the money you furnished for us there, or to pay it here, just give the order, Monsieur, and we shall obey you in this as in all things. And if you wish to advance what my poor brother needs there for the fine imposed on him, his share of the expenses, and his return journey, I shall repay you including the amount left over. And because I have been told that he has some idea of coming to this city to see me, I beg you, Monsieur, to dissuade him from that plan, partly because of his advanced age<sup>2</sup> and also because, if he should come, I would not be able to give him anything, having nothing whatever at my disposal that I could give him.

I am speaking to good M. de Fonteneil as to the heart of my heart and as to one whom I cherish more than I can say. I am, in the love of Our Lord and of His holy Mother, his most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

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<sup>2</sup>It might be speculated that Bernard is the brother about whom this letter is written since he was older than the Saint, who would hardly speak of a younger brother being of "advanced age."

205. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

*Mon Dieu*, what a gallant woman you are to have done all that you tell me! Well now, you must not stop in mid-stream. If the objections people are raising materialize and prevent success, you may have to give up the work. There is no obligation at all under pain of mortal sin, or venial. The poor, meanwhile, will have had this relief and the individuals who have assisted them, the merit. I would gladly have us part of that blessed company and I thank you for providing us with people for it.

206. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1632 and 1650]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Jesus Christ Our Lord be with you forever!

Blessed be the suffering Jesus Christ for restoring your health! Yes, certainly, Mademoiselle, I shall help you to do the Will of God in this, by means of His grace and the good use you will have to make of it. I think, in fact, that it will be good for you to go to the country when you are a little stronger to put the finishing touch on strengthening yourself while you are doing good.

We have thirty-five or thirty-six non-resident ordinands and retreatants here.<sup>2</sup> I hope we shall have at least one small room left in which to lodge your son, and we shall have him purged and bled on Monday; for, as far as the Bons-Enfants is concerned,

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**Letter 205.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 41.

**Letter 206.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Dates of the entrance of the Priests of the Mission into Saint-Lazare and of the marriage of Michel Le Gras.

<sup>2</sup>At Saint-Lazare.



there are three young men making their retreat there and they are occupying all the beds.

We have a young Lutheran girl here from Germany, dressed like a footman. She was sent to us from the mission of Gonesse<sup>3</sup> with the consent of a gentleman who was supporting her. She wants to change her ways and her religion. . . .<sup>4</sup>

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

206a. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

*Monsieur,*

*I am returning to you the rules for St-Sauveur; I had not seen them. It seems to me that the first part makes the whole confraternity dependent on the pastor. I do not know if that would be advisable. It certainly is true that the Beauvais pastors would be quite pleased with that, but it would immediately prompt them to be no longer willing for anyone to know what was going on in each confraternity. I do think, however, Monsieur, that it is necessary for the officers to inform them about the admission of the sick, at least telling them which ones they will accept.*

*It should be mentioned in the rules that the votes shall be collected by them for the election, and that the treasurer shall give her report in the pastor's presence, without mentioning the vicar general at all, as had been stated in the rules. There must also be a fixed number of ladies, and the vacancies shall be filled by those whom the company approves, and afterwards, they shall be presented to the pastors for their reception and blessing.*

*With regard to the procurator, I do not know how easy it would be to put one in each confraternity, for they will never resign themselves to having him write down the collections. As for making out the accounts, I think the sisters<sup>1</sup> will be able to do that themselves. There remains nothing more for the procurator to do except to see that the legacies are*

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<sup>3</sup>In Val-d'Oise.

<sup>4</sup>The rest of the letter has been cut off and lost.

**Letter 206a.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Saint Louise often refers to the members of the Confraternity of Charity as *sisters*.

executed, if there are any for the benefit of the confraternities. In that case, it is probable that a single procurator could suffice for everything. I mean that only for Beauvais, Monsieur, since for Liancourt the ordinary rule is good, especially that which recommends friendship among themselves and the larger confraternities, because of both the morning and evening exercises and the remembrance of the presence of God during the day; also vacancies should be filled in the manner mentioned above. There are good procurators everywhere.

Please let me know, Monsieur, whether you will include some special article for that officer who so earnestly asks to be admitted in order to obtain the benefit of the confraternity, and whether the rule will mention that there will be two young women named by Madame de Liancourt to nurse the sick. The young women will live in the house provided by this lady, and will be obligated to prepare and bring the medicines to the sick in Liancourt, and in La Bruyère, Cauffry, and Rantigny<sup>2</sup> as well. They will have the duty of visiting the above-mentioned sick at least twice a week, and of doing everything laid down by the establishment and foundation in this regard.

In those places, the collection is taken up at people's homes on Sundays, and in the churches on big feast days. The procurators keep a register and write down the amount of each collection, and the treasurer does likewise. The coffers have only two locks. I think it must be stated that the said guardians shall be from the membership of the confraternity.

I believe, Monsieur, that it would be most fitting for each coffer to have a ledger in it like the one I left you, so that everything that goes on in the confraternity may be found there. In the front of the book, I think the act of establishment should be written, next the rules, then the names of the sisters and the election of the procurator and the officers. Subsequent elections could be entered after that.

Near the middle of the book, make a note that they must write down the names of the sisters who die and those who will replace them. In the other half of the book, charitable legacies and extraordinary gifts should be registered, and in another place the furnishings belonging to the poor. The book I brought is the one from La Bruyère, because the act of establishment was fully witnessed.

I think the superioress<sup>3</sup> should keep a book in which she has someone record the names of the sick poor, the dates of their admission and death, or the date on which the Charity terminates its assistance to them.

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<sup>2</sup>Small communes in the canton of Liancourt.

<sup>3</sup>Elected president of a Confraternity of Charity.

*If you had not ordered me, Monsieur, to make this report, I would not have dared to consider it. I do not know how I delayed it so long, except that I am well aware that my mind is very slow to do good, both for others and with regard to my own practices.*

*Good Sister Jeanne from Saint-Benoît<sup>4</sup> has just brought me three young women from Colombes;<sup>5</sup> they are very pleasing in appearance and have a strong desire to serve the poor wherever we wish to send them. I think they will be coming to see you one of these days.*

*I greatly regret having lost the day you wanted to give me; I think that is partly my fault. I really do feel the need of a few days to reflect a little on myself, in order to be renewed somewhat. I think, Monsieur, that when the time comes to inspect the Charity at Saint-Laurent, if you wish to do me the honor of using me for that purpose, I will need to spend a few days there. I could make use of that opportunity if you think it appropriate. But, for the love of God, Monsieur, ask His mercy to make my needs known to you; otherwise, I shall think that He wants to abandon me entirely since He is allowing you to feel that way.*

*I am sending you the report of what was done at each meeting in Beauvais. I think it would be a good idea for the rules you are drawing up to be for Saint-Sauveur. And when you send them, give instructions that they be lent to the others to have copies made.*

*If you wish to take the trouble to reread the letter I sent you from Liancourt, you will perhaps find more information in it than what I am sending you. Please pardon my lack of organization. I would almost like to excuse myself on account of my poor memory, but you know what I am and that I shall always be, Monsieur, your most humble daughter and most grateful servant.*

L. DE MARILLAC

September 4, [1635]<sup>6</sup>

*The collections are being taken up every Monday in Beauvais, but I*

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<sup>4</sup>A parish in Paris.

<sup>5</sup>In the suburbs of Paris.

<sup>6</sup>According to a note added long ago on the back of the original, this letter would belong to 1627, but that date is certainly incorrect: Saint Louise began her work with the Charities only in the course of the year 1629 and the Confraternity of Saint-Sauveur was established in 1629 (cf. vol. XIII, nos. 139 and 140). Coste noted that this letter (formerly no. 179) was closely connected with the letters now numbered 198b-g. Since he altered the date he had originally assigned to those letters, as noted in no. 198b, n. 1, it seemed logical to change the date on this letter to 1635 as well and to reposition it accordingly.

*think it would be advisable to have them in church on big feasts. I think that, by making the establishment right after the mission that the Bishop of Beauvais wants to have given there, it will be easy to get all that can be desired for the good of the confraternity. I have not done anything at all about suggesting this collection.*

Addressed: *Monsieur Vincent*

207. - TO CLEMENT DE BONZI, BISHOP OF BEZIERS

[September or October 1635]<sup>1</sup>

Your Excellency,

I learned from M. Cassan, the brother of a priest from your town of Béziers, that you wanted to know three things about us. Now, since I was unable to have the honor of answering you at that time because I was leaving for the country, I decided to do so now.

I shall tell you, first of all, Your Excellency, that we are entirely under the authority of the bishops to go to any place in their diocese they wish to send us to preach, catechize, and hear the general confessions of the poor; ten to fifteen days before ordination, to teach all about mental prayer, practical and necessary theology, and the ceremonies of the Church to those about to be ordained; and to receive the latter into our house, after they are priests, for the purpose of renewing the fervor Our Lord has given them at ordination. In a word, we are like the servants of the centurion in the Gospel<sup>2</sup> with regard to the bishops, insofar as when they say to us: *go*, we are obliged to go; if they say: *come*, we are obliged to come; *do that*, and we are obliged to do it. We

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**Letter 207.** - Reg. 1, f<sup>o</sup> 13. The copyist notes that he had before him a rough draft in Saint Vincent's own handwriting.

<sup>1</sup>Reference to Clément de Bonzi in a dated letter to Antoine Portail (no. 209, dated October 16, 1635) prompts us to assign the months and the year in which this letter might have been written.

<sup>2</sup>Mt. 8: 5-9.

are, moreover, subject to their visitation and correction just like country pastors and curates, although for the preservation of uniformity of spirit, there is a Superior General whom the Missionaries obey in matters of internal discipline.

That, Your Excellency, is how we conduct ourselves with the bishops. Now as to whether we can send you two priests, that, Your Excellency, is where the difficulty arises, because we are few in number and possess little virtue. You may be sure, nevertheless, Your Excellency, that if we could do this for any prelate in the kingdom, it would be for your Most Illustrious Lordship, as much because of the exemplary life you lead in the Church, as for the need that I imagine your poor mountain people have of them.

As for the third question, Your Excellency, my response is that, since we go along without taking anything from the poor or from ecclesiastics for our living expenses or clothing, we would need, I think, eight hundred to one thousand livres for the maintenance of two priests and a brother.

These, Your Excellency, are the replies I can give to your Most Illustrious Lordship regarding the things you wish to know. If I were fortunate enough to be able to render you some service, Your Excellency, I would certainly consider it a special blessing from God.<sup>3</sup>

Your Most Illustrious Lordship may make full use of me, if he so desires, as of one who is, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble and most obedient servant.

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<sup>3</sup>A priest who had been dismissed from the Bons-Enfants or from Saint-Lazare, having heard of the request of the Bishop of Béziers, went to that city saying that Saint Vincent had sent him, and succeeded in deceiving the prelate, who employed him. His disedifying conduct gave Clément de Bonzi a poor opinion of the Missionaries. (Cf. vol. IV, no. 1436, the letter of December 21, 1651, to Achille Le Vazeux.)

207a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 1635]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Yesterday, I spoke to the priests' group about what Madame Goussault had told me concerning the situation at the Hôtel-Dieu. However, in the end it was decided to postpone the matter again for a few days. It is better to let everybody talk than to expose so many people, when the unfitness of a single one of them could destroy the work completely. And then, they say that those good young women are not too much to be believed in the matter.

*Mon Dieu!* how worried I am about your poor Sister Barbe<sup>2</sup> and about the other one who is a patient at the Hôtel-Dieu, as is good Madame Mussot! I am in no way recommending them to your care; you have enough worries. However, I am especially concerned about your telling me that you are able to do so little that it is a pity. I am afraid that you yourself are ill. Let me know about this, please, and if that is the case, do not go back to the Hôtel-Dieu. Marie<sup>3</sup> will take your place during your absence. If not, I think you will do well to go there tomorrow, perhaps sleep there,

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**Letter 207a.** - Bibl. Nat. n. a. f. 22.741, f<sup>o</sup> 285, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter, as well as the one immediately following, was written shortly before no. 207c which is from October 1635. In his corrections in vol. XIII, Coste reappraised the date he had originally assigned to no. 207c (formerly no. 201). Therefore, the letters previously numbered 199 and 200 have been repositioned accordingly as nos. 207a and 207b.

<sup>2</sup>Barbe Angiboust occupies an important place in the first twenty-five years of the history of the Daughters of Charity, undoubtedly the most important after Saint Louise. She entered the Community on July 1, 1634, at the age of twenty-nine and was admitted to vows March 25, 1642. The Holy Founder placed her at the head of the houses founded in Saint-Germain-en-Laye (1638), Richelieu (1638), Saint-Denis (1645), Fontainebleau (1646), Brienne (1652), Bernay (1655), and Châteaudun (1657), where she died December 27, 1658. In 1641 she was in charge of the Sisters employed in the service of the galley-slaves. Nothing is more edifying than the conference on her virtues held at the Motherhouse, April 27, 1659 (cf. vol. X, no. 109).

<sup>3</sup>Marie Joly.

and come back the following day to Saint-Nicolas in order to get Marie used to those young women little by little, and them to her.

But what shall I tell you about Mademoiselle Laurent? She appears to have good judgment but her age worries me. Nevertheless, if you think it advisable to have her come to the Hôtel-Dieu, spending two or three days with her, and after that to have her come and go from one house to the other until it is the right time to go to the country, then do so. She can observe and you can observe her. But make it quite clear to her that this is just an experiment, and to your heart that I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

207b. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 1635]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Monsieur Holden<sup>2</sup> did not come to have dinner here; let me know why; I was expecting him.

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**Letter 207b.** - According to Coste, the original autograph letter was at the house of the Picpus Fathers of Braine-le-Comte (Belgium). (Since 1954, the Picpus Fathers [the Priests of the Sacred Hearts] have had their Generalate in Rome.) The present location of the letter is unknown.

<sup>1</sup>The passage referring to Marie leads us to place this letter after no. 207a.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Holden was born in Lancaster County in England in 1586 and came to France at the age of twenty-two. He spent five years at the Collège Anglais de Douai and from there went to the Collège de Navarre where he finished his theology. Michel de Marillac, Keeper of the Seals and Saint Louise's uncle, received him into his house as chaplain in 1626 and entrusted to him the direction of his conscience. Henry Holden obtained his doctorate in 1636. He died March 14, 1662, in the community of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet. We have his annotated edition of the *Novum Testamentum* (1660, 2 vols.), a rational compendium of the Catholic religion

I shall speak with your son. He must not give up the clerical state without due consideration. If he does, there might be cause for regret. However, God, Who does everything for the best, would find His glory in it. We must be resigned to His Divine Will in all things. He is more God's child than yours; He will do what is best. Therefore, be prepared for any outcome and do not readily acquiesce in this instance. If he gives up the clerical state, people will laugh, even at that collège; if he goes elsewhere, he will be lost or at least will be running a great risk.

I have spoken to Madame Goussault. She is not surprised at the suggestion. She says that Marie<sup>3</sup> will neither pray the way it has been done, nor make repetition. But do not insist on that. You will be able to look into it now and then.

In the meantime, I recommend myself to your prayers and am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

207c. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 1635]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You think about yourself too much. You must go along in a

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entitled *Divinae fidei analysis* (Paris, 1652), a conference on grace (Frankfort, 1656), and two letters to Antoine Arnauld, combating his doctrine.

<sup>3</sup>Madame Goussault had sent her to Saint Louise.

**Letter 207c.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>In vol. XIII Coste corrected the date he had originally assigned to this letter, from July 13, 1635, to October 1635. His reevaluation of Saint Jane Frances' visits to Paris necessitated this change. The altered date required a repositioning of the letter to comply with the principles of chronology.



simple and ordinary way. You have not said anything to me recently contrary to charity; in fact, you would have acted badly in doing otherwise, considering the person and the matter involved. Let us go along in a little more simple and ordinary way, I beg you, and do not be afraid of anything in that regard.

I received your package by way of the lady you mentioned but I did not give it back to her, judging it better that way.

I do not know what to tell you about the Charity, whether it began the same year or not. I shall find out from Madame de Chantal, who will be here within twelve days,<sup>2</sup> in what year they stopped the practice. This one, I believe, began in 1617.<sup>3</sup> We shall settle that and talk about the matter at the first opportunity, if it is a source of edification.<sup>4</sup>

Madame Goussault is going to have the note written for good Madame Lagault. Oh! how ashamed I am that I have not seen her, or Madame Mussot, who is feeling better! But what are the grounds for your abjection in this work? Courage! Our Lord allows whatever feelings He chooses in His servants.

What shall I say to you about the good Mademoiselle Laurent? I

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<sup>2</sup>Saint Jane Frances made four trips to Paris: one on April 6, 1619, to found the first monastery of the Visitation there; and again in January 1628; July 25, 1635; and October 4, 1641. The trip mentioned here can only be the third one. In 1641, Madame Goussault was dead. In 1628, Saint Louise did not have "good Barbe" with her. The year 1619 is obviously too early; at that time Saint Vincent did not even know Saint Louise. The third trip itself poses a slight problem, for by July 21, 1635, Saint Louise had been in Beauvais for a rather long time (cf. no. 198c), and her absence was prolonged because of her visit to the Charities in Oise. Now the above letter is addressed to her in Paris. Here is the solution which seems to be called for: Saint Jane Frances left Paris early in September to visit several of the Visitation monasteries and came back around All Saint's Day. It is to this return of the Saint that we can apply the words in the letter: "I shall find out from Mme de Chantal, who will be here within twelve days. . . ."

<sup>3</sup>It was, in fact, in 1617 that Saint Vincent, then Pastor of Châtillon-les-Dombes, established the first Confraternity of Charity.

<sup>4</sup>It would be difficult to determine to what the Saint is alluding here. We know that, in the beginning, visiting the sick was one of the aims of the Institute of the Visitation. However, Denis Cardinal de Marquemont, Archbishop of Lyons, ordered the Visitation nuns to stop visiting the sick. Monsignor Baunard (*op. cit.*, p. 276) assumes that Saint Louise had asked Saint Vincent on what date the Daughters of the Visitation had given up that work and that Saint Vincent was answering her question.

do not know. I fear some encounter. Madame Mussot confided in M. Messier of Beauvais and told him the day before yesterday that she is leaning in that direction. Now then, please think about what should be done and let me know your opinion concerning the matter.

I send greetings to our good Barbe<sup>5</sup> and am delighted that she is feeling better. Our meeting is about to begin; that is why I am in a hurry. Good-bye, then, Mademoiselle. I am in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

208. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1640]<sup>1</sup>

I ask your pardon for not having been able to come and see you yesterday because of the straits in which I found myself; I shall come some day this week, God willing. It often happens that, at Sainte-Marie, they keep their annual confessions for me for more than a month. There is one again who has reserved hers for me for that length of time. I hope your heart will do me the same charity.

I shall look over your papers today and send them to you tomorrow. Good day, Mademoiselle. I am, Mademoiselle, your servant.

V. D.

Sunday morning

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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<sup>5</sup>Barbe Angiboust.

**Letter 208.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>After 1639, the Saint would have written the words "Sunday morning" at the beginning of the letter.

209. - TO ANTOINE PORTAIL, IN THE CEVENNES

October 16, 1635

Monsieur,

I beg Our Lord, Monsieur, to continue in you the spirit of holy meekness and also of toleration for whatever is not evil or contrary to our little rules; in that case, meekness would be cruelty. But in order to remedy those very situations, a spirit of gentleness is needed.

The Bishop of Mende<sup>1</sup> has expressed great satisfaction to me for your services. The Bishop of Béziers<sup>2</sup> has written to me requesting workers like you, Messieurs, but how can I give him any? The Bishop of Viviers<sup>3</sup> also came to see us for the same purpose. Only God can be everywhere.

The Company is getting along fine, thank God. God imparted many graces to it during the spiritual exercises,<sup>4</sup> and everyone came out of them full of fervor. Since your departure, six people<sup>5</sup> have joined us. O Monsieur, how I fear large numbers and expansion. What reason we have to praise God for allowing us to honor the small number of the disciples of His Son, in Whom I am. . . .

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Letter 209. - Reg. 2, p. 197.

<sup>1</sup>Sylvestre de Crusy de Marcillac (1628-1659).

<sup>2</sup>Clément de Bonzi (1629-1659).

<sup>3</sup>Louis-François de la Baume de Suze (1621-1690).

<sup>4</sup>The annual retreat.

<sup>5</sup>Annet Savinier, Etienne Bourel, Guillaume Perceval, Nicolas Marceille, and a gentleman from Limousin, all clerics. All but the gentleman from Limousin are listed in the *Notices*; it has been impossible to determine his identity. Simon Chastel, a coadjutor brother, is the sixth person referred to here; he was born around 1612, in Villepreux, in the diocese of Paris.

210. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1634 and 1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Jesus Christ Our Lord be with you forever!

I thank you most humbly for the trouble you took to let me hear from you, and I beg Our Lord to strengthen you more and more. Your letter found me still in bed with some slight fits of sweating which kept me from answering you, as did also a medicine they made me take afterwards. Likewise, the visitors who dropped in on me prevented me from answering you yesterday.

Now let me tell you with regard to your son, Mademoiselle, that I think there is no objection to his presenting theses to your closest friends and near relatives. But I am of the opinion that, in order to honor the humility of Our Lord, they should be read to few people and only so as to free him from a great deal of anxiety. When he is in theology school, it will be a different matter.

As for that good young woman you mentioned to me yesterday, please keep her if you think she has good judgment. That entering and leaving religious life indicates some instability; you will have to be careful about that. If there is reason to admit her in order to look into her vocation for a little while longer, please discuss the matter with Madame Goussault.

With regard to the young Italian woman, it would be a good thing to send her to Villers,<sup>2</sup> to the mother of Mademoiselle Poulaillon. *Mon Dieu!* how I wish your Sisters would make an effort to learn to read and that they might really know the catechism you are teaching! Poor Germaine is wrong not to stay with you. She would lighten your burden a great deal in that regard. But, in the name of God, recover your health before you work around them.

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**Letter 210.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The duration of Jean de la Salle's stay in the South of France.

<sup>2</sup>Villers-sous-Saint-Leu.

My slight fevers have not yet left me; you know they last a little while. But we have poor Monsieur de la Salle seriously ill in Bordeaux. I recommend him to you, but I entreat you above all to take care of your own health.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

211. - SAINT JANE FRANCES TO SAINT VINCENT

*Although my heart, very dear Father, is indifferent to everything but sorrow, never will it forget the charity you showed it on the day of your departure; for, very dear Father, it found itself comforted in its pain and even strengthened in the circumstances which are present, which indeed arise on all sides.*

*I prostrate myself in spirit at your feet, asking your pardon for the pain I have given you by my immortification, from which comes the humiliation I love and dearly embrace. But to whom can I expose and make known my infirmities, if not to my only Father who will know how to put up with them? I hope your goodness will never grow weary of doing so.*

212. - TO SAINT LOUISE

I praise God for this change, Mademoiselle, and beg Him with all my heart that it be lasting and that He perfect you and sanctify your soul more and more in these sufferings. Moreover, I thank you for letting me know about it; your doing so greatly relieved me, for who would not feel the pain which is weighing upon a person so active yet suffering. Certainly, it cannot be otherwise.

I wish you a good evening and am, in the love of Jesus and of His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

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Letter 211. - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. VII, 1st ed., p. 316.

Letter 212. - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

213. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have returned in fairly good health, thank God, but I am worried about yours. I shall come to see you as soon as possible — today, if I can. In the meantime, do all you can to stay well, I beg of you. I cannot tell you how much the poor have need of your living a long time and I have never seen this more clearly than at present.

That good young woman<sup>1</sup> seems to have a fair amount of common sense and good will. The only problem is that she has been in a religious community. However, she told me that, although she was persuaded to enter that community, her heart was with the Charity. Therefore, I do not think there is any harm in letting her try. As for the good widow accompanying her, she strikes me as uncouth, very gloomy, and vulgar. I think we shall have to send her away very gently and tell her that we shall have to think it over for a long time.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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**Letter 213.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Perhaps the one mentioned in no. 210.

214. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Palm Sunday [March 16, 1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

Four or five lines, no more. I have been intending each day to come and see you to talk with you, but business has prevented me from doing so. It is about your lodgings. Discuss the matter with Madame Goussault, the President's wife.

My heart is moved by the consolation I imagine Our Lord will bestow on both of you during your journey and good works. Meanwhile, until I have the happiness of seeing you tomorrow or the day after, here or at the Bons-Enfants, I am your servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

215. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I had planned to come and see you, but not being able to do so earlier because of some difficulties, I am asking you to let me know if you have decided upon a place to live and where it is. You may perhaps think that I have some reason which involves you on account of which I think it unwise for you to live in this neighborhood.<sup>2</sup> Oh! no, that is not the case at all I assure you. The

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**Letter 214.** - Gossin, *op. cit.*, p. 410.

<sup>1</sup>The fact that the Saint mentions a change in lodging indicates that his letter is from 1636.

**Letter 215.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The change of lodging mentioned here leaves no choice other than the years between 1636 and 1641. The first date is more in keeping with the contents of the letter.

<sup>2</sup>Near Saint-Lazare.

reason, rather, is this: we are among people who watch everything and pass judgment on everything. They would not see us go into your house three times without finding the opportunity to talk, to draw conclusions which they ought not to draw, and to repeat them wherever they go. It is not that we have been watching them, but only the one who has the power to do so. When I have the happiness of seeing you, I will speak to you about the matter in greater detail.

In the meantime, tell me: when will you be able to go to the country to visit a few of the Charities? Please let me know and, if you can do so conveniently, come for a walk this far one of these mornings. Meanwhile, honor the holy cheerfulness of Our Lord and that of His holy Mother. I am, in their love, your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

216. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You were wise to send for that good young woman. In Sucy-en-Brie,<sup>2</sup> there are four who are older and strong. M. Renar has spoken to me about them. I shall show you the petition they presented to him for that purpose. You must try to have them learn to read as soon as possible.

I cannot tell you anything about that good young woman's letter

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**Letter 216.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity. original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written a few days before no. 218.

<sup>2</sup>A place in Val-de-Marne.



except that I have not been able to read it yet. I am in such a hurry that I cannot do so now in order to give you an answer about it. I am going to the Madeleine to hold the Chapter there today. Offer this action to God, I beg of you, as with all my affection, I ask God to be the heart of your heart. I am, in His love, your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

217. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The house to which Madame Goussault was referring is not the one I mentioned to you. The first is more beautiful and is priced at forty or fifty thousand livres; the second costs about seven or eight. The first one would be scandalous for poor girls and the second is too far from the Church. You will see. I find no difficulty in honoring the prudence as well as the simplicity of Our Lord but there is less harm in failing in the latter practice than in the former, especially for you.

I shall willingly do for your son as you request.

This is the young woman; take her on trial.

Do you have any money? An unexpected matter has come up for which we need fifteen hundred livres. If you have it, we shall

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**Letter 217.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written a short time before the transfer of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity to La Chapelle.

return it to you in a short time; if you do not, please do not worry about it.

Good day, Mademoiselle, I am your servant.

V. DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

218. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Shortly before May 1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

I glanced over what you wrote me about M. Massé. Nevertheless, I have proposed him along with M. Caignet, M[adame] Gous[sault]'s confessor,<sup>2</sup> but I do not know whether either one will be chosen. One of those gentlemen suggested another man to me at the same time; I am talking about those gentlemen from Notre-Dame. This is confidential.<sup>3</sup>

I find your proposal concerning your son very good, provided you merely suggest it to him and leave him free to act as he sees fit.

We just have to give up those girls from Sucey. Nevertheless, the latter and her mother wanted you to extend your kindness to the girl from La Retaux until Pentecost, not so much so that she might devote herself to your Charity, in which she will, nevertheless, do whatever work you ask of her; her wish is to learn something so as

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**Letter 218.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written shortly before the Daughters moved into their new Motherhouse in La Chapelle, then a suburb but now one of the neighborhoods in Paris.

<sup>2</sup>Antoine Caignet, Doctor in Theology, later Canon, Chancellor, Theologian, and Vicar General of Meaux, and a renowned preacher who died in 1669. He is the author of two reputable works: *L'Année pastorale* (Paris, 1659, 7 vols.) and *Le Dominical des Pasteurs ou le Triple emploi des curés* (Paris, 1675, 2nd ed.).

<sup>3</sup>There was talk of organizing a group of chaplains for the sick of the Hôtel-Dieu.

to become qualified in time to teach the children in Sucy. So please extend to her the kindness of trying it, Mademoiselle, and we shall see that you are given what you need for that purpose. I forgot to mention this matter yesterday to the wife of the Keeper of the Seals.<sup>4</sup>

If you come with your Sisters next Tuesday morning, we shall go to La Chapelle, a village nearby on the way to Saint-Denis, but you will have to remind me about it on Monday evening.

God willing, I shall not regret what I have said to the Sisters! I think you had better go and visit the ones at Saint-Paul. I would also like you to be able to see those in this parish.

I am, meanwhile, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

Saturday, at nine o'clock

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

## 219. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I beg you to forgive me for not seeing you before I went off to the country for four or five days. Your son has made a very good beginning. M. de Sergis took charge of him on his return from the country and is at his service during his retreat. He told me that he has ruled out a military career; that leaves the clerical state and the bar. He will weigh the two and try to make up his mind.

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<sup>4</sup>Madame Séguier.

**Letter 219.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Shortly before the move to La Chapelle by Saint Louise and the Sisters.

I wrote Madame Goussault, the President's wife, that I think you would be wise to go and see the house in La Chapelle and find out how much rent they want for it. That will give you a diversion as well. She feels, as I do, that the country air is good for you. Meanwhile, remain cheerful and take care of your health.

Please send news of us and our apologies to good Mademoiselle Viole<sup>2</sup> and tell her that I hope to see her on our return. Oh! how consoled and edified I am by that good woman!

I bid you good day and am your servant.

V. D.

I saw that good young woman from Sedan; she is living in our faubourg. *Mon Dieu!* how weak and fickle she seems to me!

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

## 220. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

[1636]<sup>1</sup>

I do not know whether I wrote to you about the afflictions with which God has been pleased to visit our poor Little Company. M. Bourel<sup>2</sup> died during the mission in Mesnil, and did so in a holy manner, just as he had lived. Everyone says that no imperfection was ever remarked in him, not even by M. Boudet,<sup>3</sup> his Novice Master.

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<sup>2</sup>Mademoiselle Viole, born Madeleine Deffita, widow of Jacques Viole, Counselor in the Châtelet of Paris, would later be the treasurer for the Ladies of the Charity at the Hôtel-Dieu. Her name appears quite frequently in the correspondence of Saint Vincent, who greatly appreciated her charity, intelligence, and activity. She died in Paris, April 4, 1678.

**Letter 220.** - Lyons manuscript.

<sup>1</sup>Mention of the death of Etienne Bourel allows us to assign to this letter the year in which it was written.

<sup>2</sup>Etienne Bourel, born in Savoy, was received into the Congregation of the Mission in July 1635 and died in 1636.

<sup>3</sup>Jacques Boudet, a Priest of the Mission born in Epinay-sur-Seine, was received into the

221. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have never seen a woman such as you for feeling so guilty about certain things. Your son's choice, you say, is a proof of God's dealing with you according to your deserts. Certainly you are wrong in yielding to those thoughts and even more so in expressing them. I have already asked you at other times not to talk that way anymore. In the name of God, Mademoiselle, correct yourself of this and realize, once and for all, that these bitter thoughts come from the evil one and that those of Our Lord are sweet and gentle.

Remember also that the faults of the children are not always imputed to the parents, especially when they have had them educated and have given them good example as you have done, thank God. In His admirable Providence, Our Lord allows holy fathers and mothers to suffer anguish from their own flesh and blood. Abraham suffered because of Ishmael, Isaac because of Esau, Jacob because of the majority of his sons, David because of Absalom, Solomon because of Rehoboam, and the Son of God because of Judas. By the grace of God you have not reached that point; rather, on the contrary, you have reason to praise God for what M. Holden has told you, because he told you the truth. Your son came to see M. de Sergis yesterday, went to confession to him, and told him that he is fully determined to serve God in the ecclesiastical state, and a few other things which greatly consoled

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Congregation of the Mission in 1634 and ordained a priest in 1635. He gave missions in Brittany with M. Olier (Faillon, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 219), in the Toulouse area, in Champagne, and elsewhere. Saint Vincent used to say, "He is a holy soul."

**Letter 221.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Reference to La Chapelle permits us to assign to this letter the year in which it was written.

me, but I do not remember right now what they were. So thank God for that and be very cheerful.

Yesterday Madame Goussault told me that she signed the contract for the house.<sup>2</sup> You will have to see us in order to decide whom you will take there. I think it very wise for you to put off that good young woman until then. I do not know the other one you mentioned, who is not at your house yet.

I doubt whether I shall be able to come to your neighborhood on Sunday, and whether, when I do, I should speak to you in the chapel which is such an unhealthy place. We shall have to try to meet at Madame Goussault's home, although, however, it seems advisable for me to see you privately before then.

Courage! I wish you the peace of Our Lord and am your servant.

V. D.

We must also postpone the proposal concerning your house.<sup>3</sup> I remember what you said about subletting it by private agreement.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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<sup>2</sup>The house of La Chapelle was rented, not bought. Gobillon tells us (*op. cit.*, p. 74) that Saint Louise and her Daughters moved there in May 1636. Perhaps the following lines of the Foundress refer to that change of residence: "Go to the new lodging with the intention of honoring Divine Providence who is leading us there, and put on the disposition of doing there whatever that same Providence will permit us to do there in the future. By this change of house, honor that of Jesus and Mary from Bethlehem to Egypt and later to other places, not wishing, any more than they, to have a permanent dwelling place on earth." (*Ecrits spirituels*, A. 15.)

<sup>3</sup>Probably the house that the Sisters were going to leave in the move to La Chapelle.

222. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1635 and 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I shall have an outline made of the subjects of meditation, the exercises, and the order of the day and send it to you.

You will have to have the visits in the parishes<sup>2</sup> stopped during this period<sup>3</sup> and have them taken up again, if that young woman has the time, after it has passed. Do not let her do anything during this time. A slight fever I have will prevent me from hearing the good young woman. I shall send you someone for that purpose, if you notify me the evening before.

You certainly may write to me about your son. He was at the Bons-Enfants not long ago. I sent word to M. Pillé to have him leave calmly but promptly because M. Doignon's man had a mishap there.<sup>4</sup>

You were wise to send that good young woman in place of the sick one.

I am about to celebrate Holy Mass and shall pray for you and your good intentions. I commend myself likewise to your prayers and am your most humble servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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**Letter 222.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written while Jean Pillé was directing the house of the Bons-Enfants (1635-1638). It seems to have been written a few days before no. 223.

<sup>2</sup>The visiting of the poor in the parishes of Paris.

<sup>3</sup>The Saint seems to be referring to a fresh outbreak of the plague.

<sup>4</sup>Probably a case of the plague.

223. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[May 1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

It is true, I am leaving this morning for Pontoise and Beauvais, but I can well assure you that it is with regret at not having seen you or your new home. You would be much more useful in Beauvais than I and I shall give the ladies of the Charity the hope that you will be coming there, for I am not planning on assembling them.

The reason for my trip is without a justification which satisfies me; I am going to visit the Ursulines.<sup>2</sup> O Mademoiselle, how this annoys me and seems like time wasted for a man who owes all of it to the poor! But what can I do! For at least eight months the Bishop of Beauvais<sup>3</sup> has been urging me to do this. Because I have put it off so long, he no longer comes here when going back and forth as he used to do, nor does Monsieur Messier<sup>4</sup> write to me. That leaves only the Sisters,<sup>5</sup> from whom I received just two letters last week concerning this matter. Let us change the subject and say: *Mon Dieu!* Mademoiselle, how worried I am at seeing you go for such a long time without getting out to get some air and working continuously as you do at the Hôtel-Dieu!

I have not seen the superioress of Saint-Sauveur<sup>6</sup> with regard to

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**Letter 223.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The "new home" mentioned by the Saint can only be the accommodations of Saint Louise in La Chapelle.

<sup>2</sup>Collet says that Saint Vincent visited the Ursulines in Beauvais twice: in 1634, before the first meeting of the Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu, over which he presided on his return (*op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 232); and in 1641 (*ibid.*, p. 337). Either he made a mistake in the date or he forgot about the visit in 1636.

<sup>3</sup>Augustin Potier.

<sup>4</sup>Louis Messier, Archdeacon of Beauvais.

<sup>5</sup>The Ursulines.

<sup>6</sup>The president of the Confraternity of Charity established at Saint-Sauveur.



getting the reply for Marie.<sup>7</sup> However, could you not go to Grigny<sup>8</sup> for a week or so and leave Marie in charge of the Sisters? She is exact and serious enough for that. Do this during my absence, please. I shall tell Madame Goussault, who is coming to Pontoise, to pick you up. Mademoiselle Poulaillon can also look after your Sisters now and then.

If this is agreeable, it would be well for you and the President's wife<sup>9</sup> to go and visit the Charity in Villeneuve-Saint-Georges in order to encourage them and to reverse the decision Madame Guérin had them make, after my departure, of not going to visit the sick when there is only one patient. Her reason is that she cannot understand how a good broth can be made with five ounces of meat. That good lady is clever and haughty in her words, and is meddling in this matter, even though she is not a member.

If, in passing through Grigny, you wanted to pick up the things you bought for that place at the Bons-Enfants, that would be fine. No, rather, tell the treasurer to give someone charge of picking them up; [that] should be done by the boatman.

I am returning the Sisters' rules to you. They are so [good]<sup>10</sup> that I did not want to add anything. Read them to the Sisters soon then, unless you think I should be there, in which case, I promise you that it will be one of the first things I do on my return, God willing. It would be well for the Sisters in that parish<sup>11</sup> to be present at the same time, so that they may be uniform.

Well now, I conclude by begging you to honor the peace and tranquillity of Our Lord's soul and I commend myself to your prayers being, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

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<sup>7</sup>Marie Joly.

<sup>8</sup>In Essonne.

<sup>9</sup>Madame Goussault.

<sup>10</sup>A word left out of the original.

<sup>11</sup>Saint-Laurent parish.

I am not saying anything to you about Madame de Liancourt, except that, if she takes you just for a week or so, do as you like; but since important people never know what is going to happen to them, if she has not seen you, you would be wise to take the opportunity of going to Grigny during that time.

224. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

I am sending this messenger purposely to get news of you, in the hope that what he brings back will be good. In the name of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, do all you can to this end. You have reason to complain that I did not answer the letter you wrote me on your departure for Gournay.<sup>1</sup> But what can you expect? That is one of my customary faults. I hope Our Lord will grant me the grace of improving in this regard, if you will be so good as to forgive me.

Now then, let us talk about your ailment. Do you need a doctor? If so, let me know and I shall send you someone. You have one in Senlis, a very skillful man; he is the King's doctor and often goes to Liancourt because of the trust that His Grace and Madame de Liancourt place in him, and rightly so. Do not spare anything to get him, or to have yourself taken care of well. Perhaps you did not take enough money with you. If that is the case, let me know and I shall send you some.

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**Letter 224.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Saint Louise was in Gournay-sur-Aronde (Oise) on May 18, 1636, the feast of the Holy Trinity. On that day, she held a meeting of the members of the Charity in the château of the lady of the locality, enquired about the observance of the rule, proceeded to the election of officers, received new members, among others Madame de Gournay, and resolved some difficulties, especially with regard to the choice of the sick whom the confraternity should assist. The report she compiled of this meeting has been preserved. (Cf. *Ecrits spirituels*, A, 47.)

Your son spent a day here during these holidays and went to be purged at the Bons-Enfants. He is very well, thank God. Madame Goussault has gone to Grigny and from there to visit some of the Charities recently established near Etampes.

Your Sisters at the Hôtel-Dieu are doing fine. Only Henriette<sup>2</sup> is still unwell. Marie says it is because of your absence. That has prevented her from going to Saint-Nicolas and Barbe<sup>3</sup> to Saint-Sulpice.<sup>4</sup> Isabelle<sup>5</sup> is feeling better. The only thing wrong is that Mademoiselle Viole's girl, whom they placed with her, is scandalizing them because of the way she behaves with some young men who come to see her; her mistress dismissed her on account of them. She is that girl from Normandy on whose account you wrote to Mademoiselle Viole to ask Madame Goussault to take care of her; she has a troublesome and dangerous disposition. I sent for her yesterday to tell her not to bring young men into the house, but she did not take it well and told me she would rather leave. We must remain at peace after we have done all we can in such cases.

So much for the news that concerns you. But now let us ask you: when are you coming back? *O Mon Dieu!* I almost forgot to tell you about Madame Mussot. I am waiting for her this morning in order to find out when she is really going to leave.

Madame de Liancourt sent word that she would come to see me,<sup>6</sup> but I have found out, since I wrote the above, that there has

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<sup>2</sup>Henriette Gesseume, a very intelligent and resourceful Daughter of Charity, but too independent. A clever pharmacist, she was of great assistance at the hospital of Nantes, where she remained from 1646 to 1655. Two of her nieces, Françoise Gesseume and Perette Chefdeville, also became Daughters of Charity. One of her brothers and a nephew, Claude Gesseume and Nicolas Chefdeville, entered the Congregation of the Mission; both were coadjutor brothers.

<sup>3</sup>Barbe Angiboust.

<sup>4</sup>Marie Joly and Barbe Angiboust were in charge, during Saint Louise's absence, of the Sisters working in the confraternities of these parishes.

<sup>5</sup>Isabelle or Elisabeth Martin was among the first Daughters of Charity and one of the most talented. Sister Servant at the hospital of Angers in 1640, in Richelieu in 1641, and at the hospital of Nantes in 1646, she returned to Richelieu in 1648 and died there the next year. Her health always left much to be desired.

<sup>6</sup>Saint Vincent interrupted the letter at this point and did not get back to it until the next day.

been a misunderstanding. Since in my present difficulty I cannot undertake such a long trip, I am going to write and ask her to pass by here on her return. Madame Mussot assured me yesterday that she was leaving at the end of this week. The Prior is talking about going with her and becoming one of the Liancourt chaplains, together with another priest.<sup>7</sup>

Yesterday, because I was being hard pressed by Madame de Combalet<sup>8</sup> to send her the Sister, and since it was for her, I spoke

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<sup>7</sup>As early as 1606, the Duc and Duchesse de Liancourt had planned to summon some chaplains to live on their Liancourt estate. There were to be three of them who would live in community in a house built for them near the church and help the pastors of Liancourt and of nearby parishes dependent on the estate. Since the remuneration offered was minimal, no one came forward. A few priests from Provence finally accepted. After two years they withdrew. Adrien Le Bon, of whom Saint Vincent is speaking in this letter, did not carry out his plan. The Duc turned to Saint Vincent and to Georges Froger, the Pastor of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, and both men sent him to Adrien Bourdoise. Bourdoise allowed himself to be won over. He left Paris on September 1, 1642, and worked so well in Liancourt that in a short time he gathered a whole community around him. (Cf. Darche, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 184.)

<sup>8</sup>Marie de Wignerod de Pontcourlay was born in 1604, in the Château de Glénay near Bressuire, of René de Wignerod and Françoise de Richelieu, the eldest sister of the great Cardinal. While still very young, she married, in the chamber of Anne of Austria, the nephew of the Duc de Luynes, Antoine de Beauvoir de Grimoard du Roure, chevalier, Seigneur de Combalet, whom she had never seen and did not love. During the two years that this union lasted, the couple lived together only six months. The Marquis de Combalet, kept from his home by the necessities of war, died in battle at the siege of Montpellier on September 3, 1622. A widow at the age of eighteen, the Marquise de Combalet left the court and withdrew to the Carmelite convent in Paris. She was admitted to the novitiate and, after a year of enclosure, received the religious habit from the hands of M. de Bérulle and pronounced her first vows. Richelieu, who loved her a great deal, did everything he could to bring her back to the court. It was at his request that the Pope forbade the young Marquise to enter the cloister, that Marie de Médicis chose her, on January 1, 1625, as lady of the bedchamber, and that the King elevated her estate of Aiguillon to a duchy-peerage on January 1, 1638.

On that day, the Cardinal had her take up residence in a small mansion prepared for her in the rue de Vaugirard, one of the dependencies of the Petit Luxembourg Palace where he himself lived. The Duchesse d'Aiguillon made noble use of her immense wealth and great influence. She frequented and protected men of letters and placed herself at the head of all works of charity. She established the Priests of the Mission in Notre-Dame de La Rose and in Marseilles, where she entrusted them with the direction of a hospital which she had had built for sick galley slaves. The houses of Richelieu and Rome lived on her generosity. It was she who had the consulates of Algiers and Tunis given to the Congregation of the Mission. She contributed to the foundation of the general hospital and of the Society of Foreign Missions, took under her protection the Daughters of the Cross and the Daughters of Providence, and was a great benefactress of Carmel. She was president of the Confraternity of Charity established at Saint-Sulpice and replaced Madame de Lamoignon at the head of the Ladies of the Hôtel-

to Marie Denyse about it. She seemed to me better suited for the situation, but she gave me an answer worthy of a girl with a vocation from God to the Charity, which was that she had left her father and mother to give herself to the service of the poor for the love of God, and she begged me to excuse her if she could not change her intention in order to go and serve that great lady. After that, I spoke to Barbe, the older one,<sup>9</sup> without telling her for whom or why, and sent her to wait for me at Madame de Combalet's house. There I told her that this good lady would employ her part-time in her service and part-time with the poor of the parish. She began to cry, but since she consented, I placed her in the hands of one of the ladies-in-waiting of that great lady. However, I was quite astonished when immediately afterwards she returned to Abbé de Loyac's<sup>10</sup> house where I was, just opposite. She told me that she was startled to see such a grand court, that she could not live there, and begged me to take her away. She said that Our Lord had given her to the poor and she entreated me to send her back to them. It really astounded the Abbé to see such contempt for the grandeur of the world, and made me tell that fine Sister to go back to the lady's house and that, if she did not feel

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Dieu. The Duchesse d'Aiguillon must be placed, along with Saint Louise, Madame de Gondi, and Madame Goussault, in the first rank of Saint Vincent's collaborators. No one perhaps gave him more; few were as attached to him. She watched over his health with a maternal solicitude. The carriage and horses which the Saint used in his old age came from her stables. The death of the servant of God grieved her deeply. She had a silver-gilt reliquary made in the shape of a heart surmounted by a flame to enclose the Saint's heart. The Duchesse d'Aiguillon died April 17, 1675, at the age of seventy-one, and was buried in the Carmelite habit. MM. Bresacier and Fléchier preached her funeral oration. (Cf. Comte de Bonneau-Avenant, *La duchesse d'Aiguillon* [2nd ed., Paris: 1882].) Le Long mentions, in his *Bibliothèque historique de la France* (Fontette ed., 5 vols., Paris: Hérisant, 1768-1778), vol. III, no. 30.854, a manuscript collection of her letters, which has been lost.

<sup>9</sup>Barbe Angiboust.

<sup>10</sup>Jean de Loyac, Protonotary Apostolic, honored the clergy by his virtues and talents. He was councillor, almoner, and ordinary preacher of the King. He would have occupied the See of Toulon at the death of Auguste de Forbin, if Richelieu had not kept the Bulls from being sent. He wrote the life of Pierre de Sacjan. Prior Commander of the Order of Saint-Antoine in Paris, and that of Saint John of God.

comfortable there, she might return to Saint-Nicolas in four or five days.

What do you think of that, Mademoiselle? Are you not delighted to see the strength of the spirit of God in those two poor young women and the contempt that He has given them for the world and its greatness? You could not believe the ardor that this has given me for the Charity, or the desire I have for you to return soon and in good health so as to work at it in good earnest. Do all you can, therefore, to stay well, Mademoiselle, I beg of you, and bring along those good young women if you think they have a vocation and aptitude.

Well now, I conclude by begging God to restore you to perfect health, for which I hope from His goodness. I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, Tuesday morning, May 27, 1636

Yesterday I saw your Sisters from the Hôtel-Dieu; they are doing well. If you need my service, I shall leave everything and come; but I truly hope that you can do without it.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

225. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR IN TOUL.

June 13, 1636

Urged by Charles-Chrétien de Gournay, the Bishop of Toul, to authorize priests from the house in that town to hear the confessions of the Dominican nuns who were having difficulty finding confessors because of the disturbances in Lorraine, Vincent de Paul begs the Superior of the establishment to go and cast himself at the feet of the prelate to make him understand how much this service is contrary to the ends of the Company.

226. - JEAN-JACQUES OLIER TO SAINT VINCENT  
AND THE PRIESTS OF THE TUESDAY CONFERENCES

He who has God, has everything.  
Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

Gentlemen,

*I cannot be absent from your company any longer without giving you the account I am obliged to give of my actions. Let me tell you, Gentlemen, that we spent eleven days en route to Saint-Ilpize,<sup>1</sup> where we were to give the mission. The favor of Heaven was so great that during that time we never had two hours of sun or rain, but were always walking under the shelter of the clouds and, by the grace of God, we all arrived in good health.*

*We opened the mission the Sunday after the feast of the Ascension, and it lasted until the fifteenth of this month, the feast day of their Saint Ilpize. They wanted me to say good-bye in the evening in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. This was done with all reverence for the majesty of God Who was presiding, and also with so many tears and sighs that I think, Gentlemen, you would have had to be present to believe it. May God be blessed for everything!*

*Almost the same thing happened during the children's procession and at their Communion, which was carried out with all the reverence imaginable. The crowd then was so large, as it was on the other feast days as well, that we had to keep giving out wine in the church to the weak, one of whom had been ill for more than three weeks.*

*The people, at first, came as we would wish them to come, that is, as many as we could manage for confession, but they received this sacrament with such grace, Gentlemen, that on all sides it was easy to know where the priests were hearing confessions, because the penitents could be heard sighing and sobbing everywhere. May Jesus Christ be praised for all this!*

*However, towards the end, the people pressed upon us so eagerly and the crowd was so large, that sometimes (namely on all the feast days) we needed twelve or thirteen priests to respond to the ardor of their zeal. We would see them go from dawn to the midday heat, which was extraordinary, up to the last sermon, without eating or drinking.*

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**Letter 226.** - Archives of Saint-Sulpice, an old copy.

<sup>1</sup>A commune in the district of Brioude (Haute-Loire).

*Sometimes, on behalf of the outsiders, we had to give two hours or more of catechism, from which they emerged as eager as when they entered. This really overwhelmed us. We had to give the instruction from the pulpit since there was no room in the church and the area surrounding the cemetery was completely filled, the doorways blocked, and the windows jammed with people. The same thing would happen at the morning sermon and at the one in the evening, called the senior catechism.*

*After this I can say nothing except: Benedictus Deus! Benedictus Deus! He communicates so freely with His creatures but especially with his poor. For we have remarked, Gentlemen, that this is where He dwells and asks the assistance of His creatures in completing that which He is not accustomed to carry out alone, namely, the instruction and total conversion of His people.*

*Gentlemen, do not refuse Jesus this assistance. The glory of working for Him, of contributing to the salvation of souls and to the glory He will necessarily draw from this throughout eternity is too great. You began auspiciously and your early examples drove me from Paris. Continue this divine work because there is truly nothing like it on earth.*

*Paris, Paris, you are detaining people who might be converting a number of worlds! Alas! how many good works without fruit, how many false conversions and holy sermons lost for want of the dispositions that God is pouring out elsewhere! Here, one word is a sermon and nothing seems useless to us. Here, the prophets have not been murdered; I mean that their preaching has not been despised as in the cities. That is why, Gentlemen, all these poor people with so little education can be seen filled with the blessings and graces of God. That is what I can hope for, since I am, Gentlemen, in His love, your most humble, most obedient and grateful confrere.*

OLIER

*Vieille-Brioude,<sup>2</sup> feast of Saint John,<sup>3</sup> 1636*

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<sup>2</sup>A commune in the district of Brioude.

<sup>3</sup>June 24.



227. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Blessed be God for all you tell me about Madame Turgis.<sup>2</sup> I shall be able to come and hear her confession Saturday after dinner, God willing. Please give her the meditations on the birth and life of Our Lord between now and that time. Then continue with the Passion and some of the apparitions, and do not forget to give her [the]<sup>3</sup> holy Beatitudes two or three times. If you cannot give her all of these, give her the ones that can be done [within]<sup>4</sup> the time she is to be in her retreat.

I would not know what to tell you about those girls from Saint-Victor [or about]<sup>5</sup> M[other] Gabrielle,<sup>6</sup> except that I am begging God to remedy the whole situation.

I do not know if I shall be able to see that good young woman who they tell me is coming to introduce herself. I shall do so, if I can; if not, I beg you to excuse me and to remember me in your prayers. I also recommend to you the Mother Superior of Sainte-Marie in the city;<sup>7</sup> she is very ill.

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**Letter 227.** - According to Coste, the original autograph letter was owned by the family of the Marquis de Pierre in Aulteribe (Puy-de-Dôme)

<sup>1</sup>Madame Turgis entered the Community during this year.

<sup>2</sup>Elisabeth Le Goutteux, the widow of M. Turgis, left a high position in the world to consecrate herself to God in the Company of the Daughters of Charity. She was Superior of the hospital in Angers (1639-1640, 1644), at the Foundlings (1642), in Saint-Denis (1645), in Chars near Pontoise (1645, 1647) and in Richelieu (1646-1647). She died in Chantilly in October 1648, after a long and painful illness.

<sup>3</sup>A word left out of the original letter.

<sup>4</sup>This word is missing due to a tear in the original letter.

<sup>5</sup>The original is torn in this spot.

<sup>6</sup>If the word "Mother" is correct, the text is referring here to Mother Gabrielle de Condren, a Carmelite, the sister of Father de Condren.

<sup>7</sup>Mother Hélène-Angélique Lhuillier.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Thursday, at ten o'clock

228. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I find quite appropriate all that you tell me about the service of the poor, the Hôtel-Dieu, the room,<sup>2</sup> and Mademoiselle Viole; also about discussing with you at length some means of establishing perfect charity among your Sisters.

As for Madame Turgis, it will be well first of all for you to ask her to see fit to observe everything the Sisters do, to do as they do, and for you to treat her like one of them. Have her also make a novitiate of a few months: 1) both to honor the childhood of Our Lord; 2) and to give an example to these Sisters of behaving properly and to those who come hereafter, of whatever social class they may be, of acting in like manner, so that in the end the Sisters may have greater respect for her when she is given some charge<sup>3</sup> of them. With this end in view, let her take whatever place is available among the Sisters at table. That is how Our Lord willed to adapt Himself to the poor in order to give us the example of doing likewise.

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**Letter 228.** - The original autograph letter is at the second monastery of the Visitation in Paris, 110 rue de Vaugirard.

<sup>1</sup>The year Sister Elisabeth Turgis entered the Daughters of Charity. Let us add that the letter seems to have been written after the transfer of the Motherhouse to La Chapelle.

<sup>2</sup>Most likely the Sisters' room at Saint-Nicolas.

<sup>3</sup>The word "authority" came first to the Saint's pen, but upon reflection he preferred the word "charge."

If possible, I shall come early on Saturday to hear your Sisters' confessions so as to get them into the habit of going to confession, which I have mentioned to you.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

### 229. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1634<sup>1</sup> and 1639<sup>2</sup>]

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

So our very dear Sister is about to depart. Blessed be God for willing to free her from so many sufferings and to reward her for all the services she has rendered Him! A little indisposition I have prevents me from coming to say a final adieu to her; I shall do so from the altar, where I hope to see her more perfectly in Our Lord than at your house.

Having considered and reconsidered your suggestion about the disposition of her body, I think it inadvisable to bury her here;<sup>3</sup> I shall tell you why. Honor in this the difference between the sepulchres of Our Lord and the holy Virgin, and please be consoled in your submission to the adorable good pleasure of God. I admit that this is easy to say but the tears of Our Lord over Lazarus prove how difficult it is. If you weep, let it be little; but after that, be strong. I sometimes admire the unshaken composure

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**Letter 229.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written after the foundation of the Daughters of Charity.

<sup>2</sup>After 1639, Saint Vincent would have written the words "Saturday morning" at the beginning of the letter, not at the end.

<sup>3</sup>At Saint-Lazare.

of good religious men and women upon the death of their own. Oh! would that we be given a share in the holy Virgin's dispositions at the death of her Son! I am going to ask a share in them for you at the holy altar.

If her condition is such that the Little Company can be recommended to her prayers, I beg you to do so — I mean the Sisters' Company and our own insignificant one, myself especially, who am more in need of her prayers. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saturday morning

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

230. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1634 and 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I really feel sorry that I cannot come to see you because of the people we have here and others whom I am expecting. I beg you to excuse me and not to give way to your grief. This is the good pleasure of God, Whom you love so much. *O Dieu!* what better motive is there than God's pleasure! And what better motive yet again than the thought that this good Sister is now enjoying the happiness of His glory! Concentrate on these thoughts, Mademoiselle, and do not depart from them, I beg of you.

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**Letter 230.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written in the period between the institution of the Daughters of Charity and the death of Madame Goussault, who died on September 20, 1639. It appears that the Daughter mentioned in no. 229 as dying finally passed to her reward.

I shall send you four priests to assist at the funeral and shall try to see Madame Goussault and to tell her the news in the way you pointed out to me. I hope, God willing, to come to see you tomorrow morning. You would give me great consolation if you would consent to rest in bed these two days.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

231. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[August 1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

Here I am back again in better health, thank God; but here we are in the midst of the weapons being distributed in the house to the soldiers.<sup>2</sup> If someone brings those poor young women from Liancourt, I see no objection to your receiving them into your house for the time being, along with that good widow — so you can train her. After that, Madame de Liancourt can place them somewhere else. That seems the better thing to me. What do you think?

I have no answer to your complaint about my journey and my stay in La Chapelle without seeing you, but I have recourse to

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**Letter 231.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 68.

<sup>1</sup>This letter and no. 232 were written on or about the same date.

<sup>2</sup>News that the Spaniards, who had taken over a few fortresses in Picardy, had entered Corbie on August 5 had terrified the endangered inhabitants. The country people fled to the towns with their possessions, and men and women religious left their monasteries. Paris took in a large number of unfortunates who had fled their homes in haste and whose destitution was pitiful. The King hurried to prepare another army and to set up a defense of the capital. He himself set out for Picardy at the head of his soldiers and, in a very short time, recaptured the places that had been lost. Corbie surrendered on November 14. On November 21, Louis XIII made a triumphal entry into Paris.

your charity for the second time and hope that it will not wait for the third occasion to forgive me. I hope we shall have the honor of seeing you in two or three days. I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

232. - TO ANTOINE PORTAIL, IN PEBRAC

Paris, August 15, 1636

Far from being advisable to call Brother [Philippe]<sup>1</sup> back here, if he were already here, he would have to be sent elsewhere, because Paris is expecting a siege by the Spaniards. They have entered Picardy and are pillaging it with a powerful army whose vanguard extends to within ten or twelve leagues from here. As a result, the people from the plains are fleeing to Paris and Paris is so terrified that many are running away to other cities. Nonetheless, the King is trying to assemble an army to fight that of the Spaniards because his own troops are either outside the kingdom or at its borders; and the place where the companies are being trained and armed is here in our house. The stables, woodshed, halls, and cloisters are full of weapons, and the courtyards filled with soldiers.

This feast of the Assumption is not exempt from the noisy commotion. The drum is beginning to roll already although it is only seven o'clock in the morning. That is why they have been able to drill seventy-two companies here in the past week. Now, although this is the situation, our entire Little Company is continuing to make its retreat, with the exception of three or four men. They will be leaving to go and work in distant places, so that, if the siege does come, most of them will be free from the risk run in similar circumstances.

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Letter 232. - Reg. 2, p. 221.

<sup>1</sup>It appears that this is the same Brother Philippe mentioned in no. 202. There is no further information concerning him.

I am writing to the Abbot<sup>2</sup> that I shall be able to send him four or five priests from the Company and am asking him for alms for that purpose. I shall send another group to the Bishops of Arles and Cahors<sup>3</sup> and hope to have them leave as soon as possible, before things get more unsettled. I have had orders from our Superior<sup>4</sup> to act in this way and our friends approve of it. They could not be put to work in this area, which is in such turmoil at present. Now, make your decision and have that good brother decide from there whether it is advisable for him to return.

I agree with you and have always suspected that he is lazy by nature and is tempted by the demon of idleness; he may recall that I have told him so. I beg you to encourage him to resist, but do so with gentleness and persuasion and not with firmness as we are accustomed to do. Sick minds need to be cared for more delicately and charitably than people who are physically ill.

As for the aversion M. Le P. is exhibiting for the exercises of the Mission, you must honor the meekness, patience, and humility of Our Lord with regard to those who disliked His person and teaching, and act the same way He did.

### 233. - TO MONSIEUR DE SAINT-MARTIN<sup>1</sup>

Monsieur,

I am sending you, through M. Touschard who is on his way to Dax, the little picture I asked Monsieur Brentel to paint for you.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Jean-Jacques Olier, the Abbot of Pébrac.

<sup>3</sup>Jean Jaubert de Barrault (1630-1643) and Alain de Solminihac (1636-1659).

<sup>4</sup>Most likely the Archbishop of Paris, Jean-François de Gondi.

**Letter 233.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), copy made from the original, which was written entirely in the Saint's own hand.

Jean de Saint-Martin, counselor of the presidial court of Dax, brother of Canon de Saint-Martin.

<sup>2</sup>Following is the description given by Firmin-Joussemet, who had the picture before him ("Lettre de saint Vincent de Paul sur sa captivité à Tunis" in the *Revue des provinces de*

The gift is of little consequence, but I hope you will consider it of some worth, coming from a person who has for such a long time been so obligated to your family. When you look at it, do not forget in your prayers the most humble of your servants.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, August 16, 1636

234. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[August 1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I learned of your illness upon my return. It has saddened me. I am begging Our Lord to restore you to that perfect health which made me so happy the last time I saw you. Well, you are a daughter of the Cross. Oh! what a happiness! Please tell me if this slight relapse has you a little worried.

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*l'Ouest*, September 1856, pp. 230 ff.): "This very delicately painted picture was executed on parchment by an artist named François Brentel. It depicts the Flight into Egypt. The Virgin, seated in the shade of some large trees, is nursing the Child Jesus, while Saint Joseph contemplates them. Farther away, the donkey is grazing. In the background there is a town with some fine buildings, built in the middle of an austere looking site. The top section of the picture is occupied by two angels at prayer, borne upon clouds. The picture has a gold and black border with a purple band at the bottom on which is printed in Roman letters: 'Love God and Your neighbor,' an inscription which summarizes the teaching of the donor. Below is the artist's signature and the date 1636. The picture measures fourteen centimeters by ten. Perfectly preserved, it is especially remarkable for its exquisite touch. It seems to be a copy of a work by an artist of the Carraccio school." Arthur Loth reproduced it in his fine work *Saint Vincent de Paul et sa mission sociale* (Paris: Dumoulin, 1880), p. 74. The man whom Firmin-Joussemet calls François Brentel is probably none other than Frédéric Brentel of Strasbourg, who died in Augsburg in 1651. He was a very talented artist, with accurate drawing and brilliant, pleasant coloring. He painted several historical scenes, some portraits, and made a number of engravings and the miniatures for a manuscript entitled: *Officium B. Mariae Virginis*, 1647. (Bibl. Nat., f. 1., 10,567 - 10,568.) (Cf. Schreiber, *Das Münster zu Strassburg*, Karlsruhe, 1828.)

**Letter 234.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 77.

<sup>1</sup>The allusion to the Spanish army calls for this date.



There is no good reason to keep yourself in that constant state of alarm. It is better for you to leave there.<sup>2</sup> That will not prevent you, if things calm down, from going back to where you are now in order to enjoy the good air. I do not fear the Spanish army but some incident similar to the one that has happened. I thank you, meanwhile, for the care you take of us and beg you to look after your own health, which I am asking God to send you, being, in His love, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

235. - TO ROBERT DE SERGIS, IN LUZARCHES<sup>1</sup>

September 1, 1636

The Chancellor<sup>2</sup> wrote me the day before yesterday by special messenger to ask me to send twenty Missionaries to him in Senlis today or tomorrow. He said he would give us the instructions we would have to follow and that he would take care of us. I informed him that we could not supply him with such a large number of men, but rather twelve or fifteen, and that I would send someone to get his instructions and give them to the others. I plan to send M. du Coudray there the first thing tomorrow morning.<sup>3</sup> Please

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<sup>2</sup>He probably means: leave La Chapelle and return to Paris.

**Letter 235.** - Reg. 2, p. 273.

<sup>1</sup>The regiment for which Robert de Sergis was chaplain was encamped in that locality.

<sup>2</sup>Pierre Séguier, son of Jean Séguier, Seigneur d'Autry, and Marie Tudert de la Bournalière, was born in Paris on May 29, 1588. In 1633, he was named Keeper of the Seals and then Chancellor in 1635. In 1649, the Seals were taken from him only to be returned to him in 1656, at the death of Mathieu Molé. He retained them until his death in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, January 28, 1672.

<sup>3</sup>Abelly relates (*op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXXIII, p. 154) that Saint Vincent himself went to Senlis to offer his services to the King and left one of his priests there to transmit the King's orders to the other Missionaries with the army. He also had a tent, furniture, and food sent to them. Abelly has preserved for us the rule that the Saint drew up for them on that occasion. A few Missionaries returned after six weeks: the others remained with the army until the end of November.

write me immediately. I have been told that you are to move out tomorrow morning.

The enclosed will give you news of M. Lambert and how he acted with the Capuchin Fathers! Oh! how Christian that was and how I hope that everyone will act in the same way!

The fine people of Clichy are clamoring for their sons who are in your regiment. They are offering men or money to their captain, to whom I am writing about this. His name is M. Morin. I have made the same request to M. Piscot.

### 236. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

[Between September and November 1636]<sup>1</sup>

May God be glorified for the blessing He is bestowing upon your work! *O Jésus!* Monsieur, how great it seems to me! Just think! You personally have already procured the state of grace for three hundred soldiers who have received Holy Communion so devoutly — soldiers who are going off to death! Only one who knows the severity of God in hell or who knows the value of the blood of Jesus Christ shed for a soul can understand the grandeur of that good work. Although I have a poor realization of both one and the other, it nevertheless pleases His Goodness to grant me some small enlightenment and an infinite esteem for the good you have done for those three hundred penitents.

Last Tuesday, there were already nine hundred confessions heard in all the other army missions without counting yours, in addition to what has since been done. *O Dieu!* Monsieur, how far that is beyond my hopes! You must humble yourselves, praise God, continue with courage, and proceed, unless you have received some other order.

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**Letter 236.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXXIII, p. 156.

<sup>1</sup>Period within which some members of the Congregation of the Mission functioned as chaplains to the French army.

237. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[Before 1645]<sup>1</sup>

Monsieur,

*Madame Traversay<sup>2</sup> asked me yesterday to notify you that the Ladies would assemble on Thursday — you know the place — and that the Chancellor's wife<sup>3</sup> would also be there.*

*I was sorry I could not tell you about Father d'Attichy's<sup>4</sup> proceedings during the visit he paid to the Duchesse<sup>5</sup> concerning my son. He had been planning it for a very long time without my knowing anything about it. When I met him at the Carmelites, where the Comtesse de Maure<sup>6</sup> had sent me on some business for her, he asked about the assets my son had and reproached me for not doing anything for him. And Madame de Maure also told me that I know Monsieur de Noyers<sup>7</sup> well enough to have already spoken to him. All I did was to write two days later to Father*

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**Letter 237.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Mention of Achille d'Attichy and François Sublet allows us to be certain that this letter was written at least sometime before 1645.

<sup>2</sup>Anne Petau, the widow of René Regnault, Seigneur de Traversay and counselor in the Paris Parlement. She was the sister of President Méliand, and one of the Ladies of Charity most devoted to Saint Vincent and his works. She founded the Monastery of the Conception, rue Saint-Honoré, and was responsible for the Daughters of the Cross after the death of their foundress, Madame de Villeneuve.

<sup>3</sup>Madame Séguier.

<sup>4</sup>Achille d'Attichy, a Jesuit. He was the son of Octavien d'Attichy and Valence de Marillac and brother of the Comtesse de Maure, Anne Doni d'Attichy. He was born on April 23, 1596, and died in 1645.

<sup>5</sup>Perhaps the Duchesse d'Atri, Geneviève Doni d'Attichy.

<sup>6</sup>The historical works of Cousin have attracted the attention of scholars to Anne d'Attichy, a cousin of Saint Louise and the wife of Louis de Rochechouart, Comte de Maure, who is known principally for the role he played in the Fronde. The Comtesse de Maure, says the Duchesse de Montpensier, "was infinitely witty, capable, learned, knowledgeable, and extraordinary in all things. To be in her court, one had to be very polite, for well-bred people of both sexes came there from everywhere." (Cf. Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans, Duchesse de Montpensier, *Relation de l'île imaginaire. Histoire de la princesse de Paphlagonie* [new ed., Paris, n. p., 1805], p. 69.) In her old age, she became extremely eccentric; concern for her health robbed her of all peace of mind. (Cf. *ibid.*, p. 72; Antoine Baudeau, Sieur de Sommaize, *Le grand Dictionnaire des Précieuses* [new ed., 2 vols., Paris: P. Jannet, 1856], vol. I, p. 167.)

<sup>7</sup>François Sublet, Seigneur de Noyers, Baron de Dangu, Secretary of State, died October 20, 1645, at the age of fifty-seven. His uncle, M. de Champigny, had been Superintendent of Finances at the same time as Michel de Marillac, Saint Louise's uncle.

*d'Attichy to tell him that the only maternal duty in which I was aware of having failed my son was in not having told him that my late husband had consumed everything, his time and his life, in the care of his family, entirely neglecting his own. In order to repair that fault, I was entreating him, since he was determined to exert himself on my son's behalf without my knowledge, to take the trouble to tell the above-mentioned lady that Monsieur de Noyers knew me because he had often seen me at the home of Monsieur de Marillac, the Keeper of the Seals.<sup>8</sup> I also thought that you would give information about my son if anyone mentioned him to you.*

*Before God, that is all I have contributed to this affair. I most humbly entreat you to believe it. I would have done nothing had it not been for my meeting with those people — unexpected with regard to this matter — and my son did not even know about it. I entreat our good God to let you know His will concerning this affair and to make you realize that I would rather die than deceive you in any way, since I am, Monsieur, your most grateful servant and most humble daughter.*

L. DE MARILLAC

Tuesday

Addressed: *Monsieur Vincent*

### 238. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1645]<sup>1</sup>

I shall try to go to the Sisters' room<sup>2</sup> on Thursday, with God's

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<sup>8</sup>Michel de Marillac, uncle of Saint Louise, was born in Paris on October 9, 1563. He helped Madame Acarie to establish the first Carmel in France: his influence, purse, and time were at her service. Five members of his family entered Carmel.

Named Keeper of the Seals in 1629, he drafted the *Code Michau*, which Parlement did not wish to register. Cardinal Richelieu accused him of conspiracy and imprisoned him in Caen, then in Châteaudun, where he died August 7, 1632. His heart was given to the Carmelites of the rue Chapon, while his body was buried in the chapel of the Carmelites in the faubourg Saint-Jacques. Cardinal Richelieu also accused of conspiracy his brother, Louis de Marillac, Marshal of France (1573-1632), and had him beheaded.

**Letter 238.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter is the reply to no. 237.

<sup>2</sup>Most likely the room which the Sisters had reserved for themselves in their former residence in the parish of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.

help. I do not know why you are examining what you have done for your son, as if it were not reasonable for a mother to procure the good of her child. Would to God that I were able to do it myself! His Goodness knows how wholeheartedly I would do so, I who am your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

### 239. - TO ANTOINE PORTAIL

Paris, September 20, 1636

It is impossible for us to send you so soon the Missionaries you are expecting. The ones we had prepared have been ordered to accompany the regiments that were in Luzarches, Pont,<sup>1</sup> Saint-Leu,<sup>2</sup> and La Chapelle-Orly,<sup>3</sup> and to live in camp with them within the army. Four thousand soldiers have already gone to confession with much shedding of tears. I hope that God will have mercy on many through this humble assistance and that perhaps it will do no harm to the success of the King's armies.

### 240. - TO MADAME GOUSSAULT, IN ANGERS

Madame,

Thanks be to God for the blessing He has given your mission and for your having to come back because that chance incident

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**Letter 239.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXXIII, end, p. 156.

<sup>1</sup>Pont-Sainte-Maxence (Oise).

<sup>2</sup>Saint-Leu-d'Esserent (Oise).

<sup>3</sup>La Chapelle-Orly (Oise) now makes up two separate districts: Orry-la-Ville and La Chapelle-en-Serval.

**Letter 240.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), copy.

occurred! You will not be lacking work in these parts. Here is a job for you to do along the way: stop in at Estival,<sup>1</sup> that abbey about which you wrote telling me that the abbess is on bad terms with her religious and her mother. Try to bring her to an amicable settlement. There is a priest who is leading her astray and thus causing her to get along badly with her mother. It would be desirable for her to be out of there through some exchange of posts from her abbey to another. People are ruined by lawsuits and proceeding with them would make the reform impossible. This exchange is not for you to suggest, unless she mentions it to you — just the settlement. If you could actually prevail upon her to go through with it, that would be a good deed. Madame Borrain, her aunt, spoke to me about the affair with much feeling, but you must not mention this.

I conclude, awaiting you with great affection. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Madame, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare-lez-Paris, September 20, 1636

*Addressed:* Madame Goussault, the President's wife, in Angers

241. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Jesus Christ Our Lord be with you forever!

The President's wife, Madame Goussault, has not been in Beau-

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<sup>1</sup>Estival-en-Charnie (Sarthe). There was in that locality a Benedictine abbey in which Saint Vincent had the reform introduced. (Cf. Paul Piolin, *Histoire de l'Eglise du Mans* [Paris: Julien, Lanier et Cie, 1851-1871], vol. VI, p. 248.)

**Letter 241.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written before no. 253.

vais. She has been back in Neufchâtel<sup>2</sup> and I think that she is now in Groslet<sup>3</sup> with her mother, so that she would not be able to do what you wish with regard to Liancourt. I am ashamed that we have not yet drawn up the rules for that place. We have to work on them, with the help of God.

As for the Saint-Nicolas house,<sup>4</sup> I beg of you to be patient and to pay the entire rent from the common fund; you may perhaps need it for your Sisters.

What shall I say to you about that good young woman who is with M. Lhoste,<sup>5</sup> except that it is a fine act of charity. However, we must be careful not to make a practice of it. Would it not be better, since you are bound to it, to put Jeanne there along with that poor Suzanne? Two would live better together and perhaps it will do them no harm.

I sent my apologies to Madame de Ligin,<sup>6</sup> who is feeling better; so am I, thank God. And you, Mademoiselle, what was that little relapse you had? Oh! how true it is, Mademoiselle, that the world is full of misery! Courage! We must put up both with our own and with that of others as long as God pleases. Alas! good Madame Mesnard!<sup>7</sup> *O Dieu*, how happy I believe her to be and how I beg her with all my heart to pray to God for me! Surely I can hope for this from her goodness. I beseech your heart not to be saddened on her account or on any other, except from the pure love of God.

I am, in this same love, your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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<sup>2</sup>Neufchâtel-en-Bray (Seine-Maritime).

<sup>3</sup>We have purposely retained the original spelling, not knowing whether it is Grosley in Val-d'Oise or Grosley in Eure.

<sup>4</sup>The house the Sisters had just left the preceding May for La Chapelle.

<sup>5</sup>Perhaps Jean-Marie Lhoste, who, after having been a lawyer in the Parlement, became administrator of the Hôtel-Dieu and the Incurables, as well as of the general hospital and Saint-Jacques aux Pèlerins. He died February 17, 1672.

<sup>6</sup>A Lady of Charity.

<sup>7</sup>Perhaps Anne Le Roux, the wife of Antoine Mesnard, Seigneur de Toucheprès and other places.

242. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[September 1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

There is no possibility of your making your little retreat right now. Get well first and then we shall see. Make your Jubilee,<sup>2</sup> however, but do not fast; you are ill. The Pastor will give you a dispensation. You can go to confession and, if you would like it to be since your last general confession and for me to be of service to you in that regard, I do not plan to leave on a little seven or eight day trip until next week.

I have sent Jeanne de But away. I am really afraid, like you, that there is something wrong. If that were not the case, they would not have left her such a long time without sending her to visit or without letting me [know] about it. We have to make amends to her for a little while.

Madame Goussault is supposed to come back as soon as she can. Your son talked to me last Saturday about the place where he is to study. I refused to approve distant universities for him, in which he acquiesced quite willingly because I think it corresponded to his own opinion or because you had told him that it corresponded to yours.

I saw Monsieur de Liancourt last night.

Get well and take good care of your health. I am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

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Letter 242. - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 79.

<sup>1</sup>There was a Jubilee in 1634 and again in 1636. The whole tone of the letter seems to indicate that it was the vacation period of 1636.

<sup>2</sup>On the occasion of the 1634 Jubilee, one of the old wooden bridges over the Seine had collapsed under the weight of the crowd crossing in procession. To avoid a similar accident, it was decided on September 13, 1636, that barriers would be placed at the entrance of the bridges so as to allow only a few people at a time to cross. (Cf. Félibien, *op. cit.*, vol. V, p. 99.)



243. - TO ROBERT DE SERGIS

Monsieur du Coudray has sent me word that only one member of the Company need go to the army on horseback, with a servant, in order to be with M. Lambert in the cavalry. M. Grenu thinks that God could make use of you in this way. Please do this, Monsieur and, as soon as you get this message, leave with Brother Alexandre<sup>1</sup> whom I am sending you. He is bringing you some old clothes which I was told you would need. Take M. Callon's mule or our own and take along with you the one hundred livres I told them to give you. The good God, Who has ordinarily provided you with everything at the right moment, will not abandon you on this occasion. In the vanguard of the cavalry you will find M. Moulan, whom you know. He will give you good advice.

When you meet Monsieur Grenu, defer to him, speak to him about getting M. d'Argenson's<sup>2</sup> instructions, and give him the enclosed. He is living with the said Sieur d'Argenson and has about fifty livres; however, if he needs more money, give it to him and I shall send you more.

Well now, Monsieur, here you are then, called by Providence to an act of charity greater than any other, since it is a matter of assisting your neighbor in dire need. You can see how fortunate you are that Providence had you in mind for this work, and the blessing you may hope for therein. Go therefore, *in nomine Domini*, in the spirit in which Saint Francis Xavier went to India, and you will win, like him, the crown Jesus Christ has merited for you

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Letter 243. - Reg. 2, p. 273.

<sup>1</sup>Alexandre Véronne, a coadjutor brother, born May 15, 1610, in Avignon, was received into the Congregation of the Mission, July 22, 1630. He was infirmarian at Saint-Lazare and was so dedicated and capable that he won the esteem of all, particularly of Saint Vincent. His death on November 18, 1686, was announced to the whole Company in a circular from the Superior General. Brother Chollier wrote his life, which was published in the *Miroir du frère coadjuteur de la Congrégation de la Mission* (Paris, 1875), pp. 145 ff., and which also served as the basis for his biography which appeared in the *Notices*, vol. III, pp. 528-548.

<sup>2</sup>René de Voyer d'Argenson, Intendant of Picardy. He became Superintendent of Justice in Provence, April 4, 1646; Ambassador to Venice, June 24, 1650; was ordained a priest on February 24, 1651; and died on July 14 of the same year at the age of fifty-four. By his wife,

by His precious blood, and which He will give you if you honor His charity, zeal, mortification, and humility.

I embrace you wholeheartedly with what affection you can imagine. Take some linen for yourself and for M. Grenu from what is in Pont;<sup>3</sup> it had been sent for the Company. Take also the Mass furnishings for yourself. I beseech Our Lord once again to be your consolation, your strength, your example, and your glory.

244. - TO ROBERT DE SERGIS, IN ROYE

Monsieur,

May the holy name of God be blessed, Monsieur, because His Providence detained you with the Chancellor<sup>1</sup> as a result of the idea he had of asking me to send someone to accompany him! O Monsieur, how adorable and admirable are the ways of God! Joseph was going to Egypt to undergo the miseries that accompany slavery and there he found his own happiness and that of his family. You were going off to war to endure its calamities and Our Lord engaged you in the service of the Chief Justice of the kingdom, one of the finest men alive. May it please Our Lord to have you find there a distaste for the things of the world through the greater knowledge you will acquire of their vanity. May you also be able to share this with us on your return, for it is certainly a good to be more esteemed than all the honors and possessions of earth! Stay there then, Monsieur, since you are not the one who put yourself there; it is plainly Providence which has arranged things in this way.

I do not quite understand what your position is, whether it is to

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Hélène de la Font, who died in 1638, he had a son named Marc-René, author of the *Annales de la Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement*, published in 1900 by Father H. Beauchet-Filleau.

<sup>3</sup>Pont-Sainte-Maxence.

**Letter 244.** - Collection for the process of beatification.

<sup>1</sup>Pierre Séguier.

act as his chaplain in the absence of M. Peleus or to assist the soldiers in his retinue. If it is the first, I have nothing to tell you regarding confession, Holy Mass, or the saying of grace. You know what to do in the first two cases and will find out what is to be done in the third; except that, with regard to the first, what honest people tell us is sufficient without our seeking information, for, as a great man has said, *quod supra nos nihil ad nos*.<sup>2</sup>

There are a few ceremonies at the end of Mass when it is said in the presence of the great: one turns around and bows to them at the end of Mass after taking off the chasuble. I have seen our blessed Bishop of Geneva<sup>3</sup> make this act of reverence to the General of the Galleys.<sup>4</sup> Your status is far below that of this great and holy prelate. I think, moreover, that one brings them the corporal to kiss and goes to give them holy water after the Mass. I have never done this and know nothing about it, so make some inquiries. If you eat occasionally at the majordomo's table, always try, Monsieur, to have the least important place there. Majordomos never give up their place and in most localities noblemen precede chaplains at table, even in the residences of prelates.

I used to hold it as a maxim to consider the General in God and God in him, and to obey him as God, and his late wife as the Virgin, and not to put myself forward unless they called me or for some urgent and important matter.<sup>5</sup> In the name of God, Monsieur, act in like manner. As for the servants, you must pay them great honor and treat them kindly, cordially, and most respectfully. Above all, you should say something to them about God now and then and take great care not to ask for information about the household or about the State.

If you are there in the second capacity, see if you can give a few catechetical instructions in the church on certain days of the week.

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<sup>2</sup>*What is above us is not our concern.*

<sup>3</sup>Saint Francis de Sales.

<sup>4</sup>Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi.

<sup>5</sup>Saint Vincent discharged the functions of chaplain in the family of the General of the Galleys from 1613 to 1625.

Remember what Saint Francis Xavier used to do on the ship during his voyage to the Indies. Try to imitate him and to do what you think before God he would do if he were in your place. Please take him as your special patron.

The Pastor in the town<sup>6</sup> is the one you visited at the Bons-Enfants. Write to Monsieur Grenu often to comfort him and send him about six écus. Let me know what you need and how you are getting along and I will provide for you with the help of God whom I am entreating to give you a share in His Son's humility and zeal for souls. You know the Chancellor's instructions with regard to the sick. You may point out that you have never been more in need than right now.

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

VINCENT DEPAUL

September 29, 1636

It has occurred to me to send you also these two proverbs on the back of this letter; with regard to the master: *ut in igne sit cum principe*;<sup>7</sup> and with regard to the servant: *nimia familiaritas parit contemptum*.<sup>8</sup>

*Addressed:* Monsieur de Sergis, Priest of the Mission, in Roye

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<sup>6</sup>Roye (Somme).

<sup>7</sup>*Let him be with the leader as towards a fire.* A famous proverb of Socrates mentioned in its Latin form by Lactantius in his *Divinae Institutiones*, bk. II, chap. 20, and popularized in the *Adages* of Erasmus (ed. H. Estienne, 1578, p. 215). Saint Vincent seems to be paraphrasing the ancient advice to approach a leader as one would approach a fire — with caution.

<sup>8</sup>*Too much familiarity breeds contempt.* This proverb first appeared in Saint Thomas, *Commentarium in Joannem*, chap. IV, lect. VI, no. 2.

245. - ROBERT DE SERGIS

October 19, 1636

I was consoled at receiving a letter from you and likewise distressed, seeing the danger in which you feel yourself to be. In the name of God, Monsieur, take every precaution your work will allow, trusting that He Who from all eternity has chosen you to assist the poor in that area will preserve you as the apple of His eye insofar as His glory and your welfare require it. After that, who would want to live or claim anything on this earth? Who, conscious of conflicting feelings within himself, would not mortify them, realizing that our days are numbered and that we cannot add a moment of life to the last one God has determined for us? That being so, Monsieur, let us abandon ourselves to Divine Providence. It will know quite well how to procure what we need.

Speaking of Providence, are you not aware that it takes such care of you that it seems to be concerned about you in a special way? If that were not the case, why would it have chosen you from among so many holy souls in the army to give you one of the greatest employments for the glory of God and the good of the poor? We are lost in admiration, every one of us, at seeing how Providence thinks of your concerns and provides for all that you need. Please let all of this be then a motive for entrusting yourself to it entirely.

You say that the almsgiving is falling off! Oh! how that message grieves me! Grace is necessary to begin and we need more to persevere to the end. Let us beg God to give it to those who are obliged to meet so many needs. M. Desclaux,<sup>1</sup> the Cardinal's<sup>2</sup>

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Letter 245. - Reg. 2, p. 275.

<sup>1</sup>Pierre Desclaux, born in Mugron (Landes), died October 7, 1637.

<sup>2</sup>Armand Jean du Plessis, Cardinal Richelieu, was born in Paris on September 9, 1585, the youngest of five children of François du Plessis and Suzanne de la Porte. As Bishop of Luçon he acted as a spokesman for the clergy at the Estates-General of 1614. Raised to the cardinalate in 1622, he entered the Council of the King (1624) and quickly became its head. His guidance of foreign affairs helped to raise France to the highest rung among the European powers. In the administration of French internal affairs Richelieu imposed useful reforms in finances, the

confessor, can be a great help in that regard and is most benevolent in such matters. If you see him, please remember us to him and assure him of our obedience.

246. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I think that you would do well, Mademoiselle, to see Madame Fieubet,<sup>1</sup> if she is in the group at the Hôtel-Dieu, and tell her what you told me. I am really afraid that the Sisters are a little to blame, at least indirectly. We must give our attention mainly to the poor villages, because as far as the towns are concerned, it will never be any different. We are deluding ourselves by dallying in them. I embrace and cherish these contradictions; and do not think that this is discouraging me — I mean the plans for the villages. I am in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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army, and legislation (*Code Michau*). He was the author of royal absolutism: he destroyed the privileges of the Huguenots and of the Provinces; he reestablished the authority of the intendants throughout France. He died on December 4, 1642, attended by, among others, his niece, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, and King Louis XIII, who followed the Cardinal's death-bed advice in appointing Mazarin as Chief Minister.

**Letter 246.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Probably Claude Ardier who died August 29, 1657. She had married Gaspard de Fieubet, Seigneur de Launac-en-Guyenne and other places, secretary of the King. He died while State Treasurer, August 12, 1647, at the age of seventy.

247. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

A little dose of medicine that I took yesterday prevented me from sending you an answer. Today, then, I shall tell you that, if you take the trouble to come to your Sisters' room at Saint-Nicolas tomorrow after dinner, I shall have the happiness of seeing you there — in the event that I do not see you tomorrow morning at La Chapelle or do not send you word to the contrary. Therefore, borrow the carriage to come, if you need it. I shall let you know about that tomorrow, as early in the morning as I can. Please forgive me for speaking to you with such uncertainty; it is because of various circumstances which may come about at any moment.

I am worried about our poor Sister who is ill at Saint-Louis<sup>1</sup> and about what has become of the others, because they are not in their room. Please tell me what you know about them. We had a mishap almost like that at Saint-Lazare.<sup>2</sup> I still have not gone there to talk, without much ado, to a few people with whom I have business.

I just had the thought that, if you could come tomorrow around nine o'clock to your Sisters' room at Saint-Nicolas, I could see you and you could have dinner there.

In the meantime, I wish you a good day and am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. D.

Collège des Bons-Enfants, October 21, 1636

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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**Letter 247.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This was the hospital to which the plague-stricken were brought.

<sup>2</sup>A case of the plague.

248. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LA CHAPELLE

November 2, 1636

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am writing to you from Fréneville on my return from Orléans. I received your letter at the house that Madame de Herse, the President's wife, gave us. It consoled me more than I can say when I read about the decision that you told me your son has made. May God be forever blessed for giving you this consolation and for giving it to me also. I was dreading in every way any other station in life for him! Let him study theology then; that is fine. I pray God to give him a share in the zeal for saving souls that He has given to his mother and in the grace He has imparted to her for that purpose, poor and weak as she is. I thank Our Lord, moreover, for having preserved for you your good Sister who was ill at Saint-Louis. You would not believe, Mademoiselle, how relieved I am.

What shall I say about M. Drouard's<sup>1</sup> suggestion? I certainly think that it is full of piety and that it is to be hoped it will succeed, if there are any priests to be found who have such zeal. As for the funds they need for their support, I am sure the officers of the Hôtel-Dieu Charity will agree that what they need be taken from what little there is, while awaiting the Ladies' meeting. Please mention this<sup>2</sup> to Madame Goussault, the President's wife. I

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**Letter 248.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Bertrand Drouard, squire, Gentleman-in-waiting of *Monsieur*, Gaston, Duc d'Orléans, brother of Louis XIII. Drouard, together with Saint Vincent, assisted the Daughters of Providence after the death of Mademoiselle Pollalion (September 4, 1657). Speaking of the second mission given at La Chapelle for the Lorraine refugees, Collet says: "A layman named Drouard spread the fire of charity there." (*Op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 309.)

In the period preceding the French Revolution, it was accepted court practice to use the title *Monsieur*, standing alone, to refer only to the king's next younger brother. Until the birth of Louis XIV (1638), Gaston, Duc d'Orléans was heir to the throne of Louis XIII.

<sup>2</sup>This is referring most likely to the plan of placing two priests at the Hôtel-Dieu for the



may perhaps stop by Grigny in two or three days, if I go a little out of my way. If she is there, I shall speak to her about it.

In the meantime, I conclude with a heartfelt desire that you stay well. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

With the help of God, I hope to be in Paris in eight to ten days.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in La Chapelle

249. - TO ROBERT DE SERGIS, IN AMIENS

November 1636

All our sick men are over the fever and no mishap has occurred here since, by the grace of God. Everyone is well in the four places where missions are being given and here also, so it seems that Our Lord will take pity on this Little Company through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. With that end in view, we have sent M. Boudet to pay a visit to her at Chartres. However, everything is in the order of Providence which perhaps will see fit to dispose of things otherwise. May His Holy Name be blessed! He is the Master and does all for the best. Let us leave the care of everything to Him.<sup>1</sup>

I wanted to tell you this before anything else, because I think it is the news that will please you most. I confess that what you say in your letter has made me see clearly how much you have taken this mishap to heart. It seems to me I have never been more aware of the deep roots that charity towards the members of the Commu-

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spiritual needs of the patients. In 1642 their number was raised to six. They received forty écus a year and were housed and fed at the Hôtel-Dieu. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXIX, p. 139; Alexis Chevalier, *L'Hôtel-Dieu de Paris et les Soeurs Augustines* [Paris: H. Champion, 1901], p. 320.)

**Letter 249.** - Reg. 2, p. 276.

<sup>1</sup>The plague had broken out at Saint-Lazare in October of that year. (Cf. no. 247.)

nity has implanted in you than on this occasion, and I cannot tell you how much it has touched me.

Now then, may God be blessed for everything and for having willed to provide the cement that has bound you more closely to the Company and through it to Him. I thank Him with all my heart for the work He is giving you and for the manner in which I am convinced you are accomplishing it, especially for the way you are handling the affair of those good religious to be reformed. They can indeed be reformed through the council and the order the Cardinal<sup>2</sup> has established for that purpose in Paris. Let me say just this much to you about that. In such cases, we must be satisfied with suggesting the good to be done to those on whom it depends without persuading ourselves that, because we have undertaken it, we have to make it succeed. The good angels are satisfied with offering suggestions and leaving the rest to be done by God and by the individuals entrusted to them.

I greet M. Grenu and you as well with all the tenderness in my power. . . .

#### 250. - TO SAINT LOUISE

How are you, Mademoiselle, after your difficulty this morning? Would you like to send someone to visit your son? If so, I shall send you a man this evening. Just let me know your wish, please, and be as lighthearted as you can in union with the cheerfulness of the Blessed Virgin in similar circumstances.

Your son is well, I hope, and I am your servant. I shall come to see you if this messenger does not tell me that you are fine.

Adieu, then, Mademoiselle. Be very cheerful in Our Lord.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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<sup>2</sup>Cardinal Richelieu.

251. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Saint-Lazare, Wednesday morning [1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

So now, that good young woman has left without saying a word. Blessed be God! Oh! what a noble crown she is losing! We shall have to replace her. What do you think, Mademoiselle, of taking Sister Geneviève from the Hôtel-Dieu for that work, and of putting in her place Madame Pelletier<sup>2</sup> or Madame Turgis. We need someone who is respected in that spot because of the meetings that take place there on the children's<sup>3</sup> behalf and the necessity of welcoming the ladies. I think the first, Madame Pelletier, would be more appropriate in the duty, first of all because she will be highly suited for both tasks, and also because that is Madame Turgis' neighborhood, which might be a temptation for her. If that is agreeable to you, I beg you to tell Madame Pelletier about it for me and that I, along with you, am asking her to render this service to God in that place.

I would have come to see you, were it not for a slight indisposition I have. If I can do so, I shall come to visit you after dinner. Waste no time in any case, and convey the decision to Madame Pelletier so that she can go as soon as possible to render service to God in that area. The members of the Charity are fortunate

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**Letter 251.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The remark concerning Sister Geneviève [Poisson] seems to demand that we place this letter near no. 225, which must have followed closely upon it. Sister Geneviève manifested great talent and prudence in working with the foundlings, especially during the civil wars and the Fronde. In 1657, the office of treasurer of the Community was confided to her.

<sup>2</sup>Could this not be Catherine Vialart who, on August 10, 1632, had married Madame Goussault's nephew, Nicolas Pelletier, Seigneur de la Houssaye and Master of Accounts, who entered the priesthood after his wife's death? If it is she — and everything seems to indicate this — the Saint made a unique exception for her by accepting her among his Daughters of Charity, where, moreover, she did not persevere. Catherine Vialart was the daughter of Madame de Herse.

<sup>3</sup>The foundlings brought to the Hôtel-Dieu and then sent to the Couche.

enough to resemble Our Lord by going, like Him, now to one place, now to another, to assist their neighbor. O Mademoiselle, what a happiness to have this conformity with the Son of God, and what a blessed sign of their predestination the Daughters of Charity possess in this! May Our Lord be pleased to grant to all of them the dispositions they need for it! I hope for this from His goodness and I am, in His love, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

252. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Since you have brought your ladies to accept the loss of Geneviève, please send her then; but as for going on foot, indisposed as she is, it is to be feared that she might pick up some illness. That is why I think it advisable to have her go in the Senlis coach, which leaves tomorrow, or in the Clermont cart.<sup>2</sup> If she takes the Senlis coach, she can go from there to Verneuil,<sup>3</sup> which is the direct route, and from there to Liancourt; she will have to walk three leagues. If she takes the Clermont cart, she can have them let her off across from Liancourt. I am sending you an écu for that purpose, and I beg you to nourish yourself well with all your own

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**Letter 252.** - The original autograph letter belongs to the Priests of the Mission at the Provincial Secretariat, 4 Cabra Road, Dublin 7.

<sup>1</sup>Letters 241, 252, and 255 have some points in common which allow us to place them close together. There is no doubt that no. 241 belongs to the year 1636.

<sup>2</sup>In Oise.

<sup>3</sup>In Oise.

wealth because, in truth, I am convinced that your indispositions occur only from lack of food. Please do as I ask then, for the love of God.

As for those young women, I do not know what to say about them, because I have not seen them. I shall make good Marie<sup>4</sup> understand the importance of preferring those who are most suitable, and I shall communicate to Mademoiselle de la Bistrade, when she returns from Burgundy, the way you are testing their ladies, provided you will forgive me for not having been able to work on our rule for Liancourt. I shall do so at the first opportunity in accordance with your report.

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

253. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

That good little Marie from Péronne indicates that she would rather belong to the Charity than go to serve that good lady. She is supposed to come and see me tomorrow morning or the day after. If she perseveres and you trust that she will do well there, keep her, if you see fit.

People are only paying eight to ten sous for the grinding of a

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<sup>4</sup>Marie Joly.

**Letter 253.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The reference to Madame de Ligin indicates that this letter was written after no. 241 and must have followed closely upon it. Reference to Michel Le Gras' studies also permits us to verify that this letter was written in 1636.

*sétier* of wheat.<sup>2</sup> When you notify me, I shall send you the man who has charge of the mills here in the house.

If your son has no difficulty defending theses on general philosophy, there is no harm in letting him do so. That will oblige him to study harder and to gain more confidence in debate.<sup>3</sup>

The good use you must make of your health at present is to preserve and fortify it so as to be able to do something else in time, since those are the doctor's orders.

It would be well to have that good young woman, Isabelle,<sup>4</sup> eat some eggs. *Mon Dieu*, how sorry I feel for that fine young woman! I send her my heartfelt greetings and intend to celebrate Holy Mass for her tomorrow with God's help.

*Mon Dieu*, how happy I would be to see you, were I not prevented by a certain difficulty! Rumor has it that the Hôtel-Dieu brought about Madame de Ligin's death.<sup>5</sup> There is. . . .<sup>6</sup>

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

253a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]

Mademoiselle,

May Jesus Christ, Who is our joy in heaven and our life, be with you forever!

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<sup>2</sup>An ancient measure which varied according to the country and the matter being measured (approximately eight pints or four-tenths of a liter).

<sup>3</sup>Michel Le Gras finished his philosophy in 1636. In November of that same year he was preparing to enter theology. (Cf. no. 248.)

<sup>4</sup>Elisabeth Martin.

<sup>5</sup>The frequenting of the Hôtel-Dieu, where she used to go to visit the sick.

<sup>6</sup>The bottom of the letter has been cut off and lost.

**Letter 253a.** - Autograph letter. According to Coste, the original was at the house of the Priests of the Company of Jesus in Aix; however, its present location is unknown. Coste printed this letter in vol. XIII, second supplement, p. 841, no. 3318, and linked it with no. 253.

May God be praised because He humbles and refreshes, because He has brought you so low, and because you are now in a better state of mind. I earnestly beg Him to let you feel the joy in my heart with as much tenderness as I experienced because of your letter. Certainly, it is not that any thought came to me that Our Lord intended to dispose of you with this blow, because I could not have seen you in that state and not run to you, whatever might be the condition in which a slight tertian ague has placed me. May God be praised once again! I could not say that to you enough, or tenderly enough, to my liking.

You wish then to receive Holy Communion. Very well, do so, Mademoiselle, while I celebrate the Holy Sacrifice for you and your son. As for him, I think you would do well to allow him to give the sermon being suggested to him without worrying about presenting theses to people. Let him present them only to Our Lord and the holy Virgin. Have him let me know the day and I shall come or send someone.

I am grateful to you for being reluctant to leave your Sisters in that condition. I see that it is also for them Our Lord is preserving you. Strengthen yourself then to raise them to the degree of virtue He asks of them and take some nourishment. The wife of the Keeper of the Seals told me a little while ago that you do not eat enough. You shall not be in want.

As for the good young woman who is asking to go to Liesse,<sup>1</sup> take care that you do not let her. *O Jésus!* Mademoiselle, she must be made to understand that the virtue of a Daughter of Charity does not consist in that!

The meeting has been postponed because the doctor wishes me to be bled tomorrow and then purged.

I wish you, meanwhile, the joy of Our Lord in the depth of your

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The letter has been inserted in its present position according to the indication given in the *Annales* (1937).

<sup>1</sup>Village of Notre-Dame de Liesse in Aisne, a pilgrimage site.

heart, and I am, in His love, more than I can express it, in His love, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

254. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]<sup>1</sup>

I really wish, Mademoiselle, that you could persuade that poor Nicole to go and stay at Saint-Benoît or somewhere else. If she agrees, you will have to write to Mademoiselle Viole to accept her. Yesterday I met the young woman from that parish;<sup>2</sup> she is asking for someone else. Oh! what a good deed you would be doing if you could manage that! But I think it inadvisable for us to proceed authoritatively; that would have unfortunate consequences. To speak to her, I cannot. I am about to begin the visitation at Sainte-Marie in the faubourg.<sup>3</sup> I have been putting it off for two years.

As for Saint-Jacques, I will let you know. I believe that the young woman from Fréneville whom I had mentioned to you will not be coming. I shall do whatever Madame Goussault desires with regard to her daughter.<sup>4</sup> If the work is going to begin at the Hôtel-Dieu and you are going there, I beg God to keep you in perfect health and to bless your work.

Madame Bourdin from Villepreux has written to me two or

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**Letter 254.** - The original autograph letter, a gift of Bishop Rivet, at one time the Ordinary of the diocese, belongs to the major seminary of Dijon.

<sup>1</sup>This is the date suggested by the resumption of the Sisters' work at the Hôtel-Dieu.

<sup>2</sup>Saint-Benoît.

<sup>3</sup>Second monastery of the Visitation nuns, which had been established in the faubourg Saint-Jacques in 1626.

<sup>4</sup>Madame Goussault was thinking about arranging a marriage for her daughter, Marie-Marthe. She married Nicolas Lotin, Seigneur de Martilly.



three times and has told me through her brother, the Capuchin, that she feels inclined towards the suggestion I offered her. I did not give her any written reply, but I told her brother that she must look into it and we must see her. Please give this matter a little thought, and take care of your health.

I am, Mademoiselle, your servant.

V. D.

Tuesday morning

255. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Our men have urged me to go to the country on account of my slight fever. I think it is a little green to be cured so soon. We shall see what Our Lord wants. I am both deeply sorry and ashamed for leaving without seeing you. Your usual charity will forgive me and you will please take care of your health for the love of Our Lord and the work He has entrusted to you.

Your Geneviève may be ill, and your other Sisters as well. Perhaps you should send her to Hersé.<sup>2</sup> I may go there before my return or shortly after, please God. She was saying that a little wine now and then would be good for them. However, I think it would be unwise for you to get her used to that.

As for Liancourt, I have given the rule to Monsieur de la Salle<sup>3</sup>

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**Letter 255.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), copy made from the original, which was entirely in the Saint's own handwriting.

<sup>1</sup>Like nos. 241 and 252, internal evidence indicates 1636 as the year in which this letter was written.

<sup>2</sup>Perhaps Hercé in Mayenne.

<sup>3</sup>He had returned to Saint-Lazare some time within the year, after having spent more than a year preaching missions in the south of France.

to be drawn up. It would be good for you to see that widow from Villepreux,<sup>4</sup> if you have not already done so. Aside from that, I do not know whom to send you. Look into the matter. If Barbe<sup>5</sup> were set to work at it, she might possibly make a success of it. The only thing that upsets me is the change.<sup>6</sup> Make use of her as Our Lord inspires you.

As for your son, if he wants to come here because no other place suits him better, arrange for it. And be very cheerful in Our Lord.

I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Monday morning

256. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[December 1636]<sup>1</sup>

*Monsieur,*

*Madame de Beaufort has notified me that now is the best time to work at establishing the Charity at Saint-Etienne.<sup>2</sup> The Pastor greatly desires it, and he thought it advisable that she and another lady take up the collection for that purpose on these holy days, which they have done.*

*I most humbly entreat you, Monsieur, to take the trouble of letting me know how I am to proceed. I had thought of telling her, if you think it appropriate, that the ladies who are the most eager for this holy work should go to visit the Pastor and tell him that, in order to begin well and to persevere, they need a large number of people joined together for this holy work, both of high rank and of humble circumstances. Some will*

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<sup>4</sup>Madame Bourdin.

<sup>5</sup>Barbe Angiboust.

<sup>6</sup>Of Barbe Angiboust.

**Letter 256.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The year is indicated on the back of the original.

<sup>2</sup>A parish in Paris.

contribute more; others will devote themselves more willingly to visiting the sick poor, each on her own day. And so that no one be inconvenienced, they should see whether it would be useful to divide the parish into two sections. But, in order to work effectively, it would be necessary, first of all, to entreat the said Pastor to take the trouble of having a full report drawn up by some priest who knows his parishioners and, afterwards, to have a sermon given in his church for that purpose. At the end of the sermon, all the ladies named could be assembled and an announcement also made at the Mass, that anyone of any condition of life who would like to be a member could come to the meeting. At the meeting, the rule observed in the other parishes will be proposed.

I am sending you all this, Monsieur, in order to cut short the time. These good ladies have been trying for such a long time to get the courage for this, that I think we should strike while the iron is hot. But, please tell me anything else apart from what I am suggesting to you, because you are well aware that it must be done this way.

I most humbly thank you, Monsieur, for your kindness. The good God knows well that I needed the help. That is why He has provided me with the address of a dairymaid who has been supplying us with milk for three days now.

Here we are, near the end of the year. If God grants me life to begin the next, I greatly desire that it be of a kind that is fit for His service. Please say a few good words to me in that regard. Poor people are content with little, which little I shall regard as a great deal, since I have given myself to God through you, of whom I am, Monsieur, the most humble daughter and servant.

L. DE M.

Monsieur, all your Daughters take the liberty of [recommending] themselves to you.

Addressed: *Monsieur Vincent*

257. - SAINT JANE FRANCES TO SAINT VINCENT<sup>1</sup>

[December 1636]<sup>2</sup>

*My most honored and dear Father,*

*I entreat the divine Infant of Bethlehem to fill your soul abundantly with the graces and blessing of His holy Nativity. It is a long time since I have given myself the honor of writing to you. However, I have no fear of your forgetting me before God, and beg you to grant me one of your Masses, for I am extremely poor. This life would weigh heavily upon me, if I did not see in it the good pleasure of God, which is consolation enough for me. That is all I can tell you about myself, dear Father, not knowing what else to say.*

*Our dear Sister Superior in the faubourg Saint-Jacques in Paris<sup>3</sup> shared with me the advice you were pleased to give us concerning our union.<sup>4</sup> It is good and sound, but still, in my heart, I have not been able to accept it. I say this to you with such frankness because your goodness has given me the confidence to do so. Our spirit could not bear any authority*

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**Letter 257.** - *Les Epistres spirituelles de la Mère Jeanne Françoise Frémioi, baronne de Chantal*, Lyons, 1666, p. 185, letter 85.

<sup>1</sup>The editor indicated as recipient "a priest of a religious order"; it is undoubtedly the Superior of the monasteries of Paris, Saint Vincent de Paul.

<sup>2</sup>The first sentence of the letter clearly indicates the season, while the reference to the recent sojourn of Saint Jane Frances in Paris limits the choice of year to 1628 or 1636. The passage referring to the Visitor lends more weight to 1636 because this issue was not widely discussed in 1628.

<sup>3</sup>Mother Marie-Agnès Le Roy, born in Mons in 1603, was, through her mother, the niece of Philippe de Cospéan, Bishop of Lisieux. In 1624 she entered the first monastery, which she left, at the request of the Marquise de Dampierre, to join the group of Sisters who were sent to the monastery in the faubourg Saint-Jacques at the time of its foundation. She became directress there and then assistant. The votes of the Sisters entrusted to her the duty of Superior three times: from June 11, 1634, to May 24, 1640; from May 27, 1646, to May 13, 1652; and from June 6, 1658, to 1664. She went in person to inaugurate the monasteries of Amiens and Mons, where she remained three months, and founded that of Angers and the third monastery in Paris. She also took a prominent part in the establishment of the monastery in Warsaw. She died May 18, 1669. (Cf. *Année Sainte*, vol. V, p. 547.)

<sup>4</sup>Saint Vincent was among those who feared that the absence of a moral bond among the convents of the Visitation, which were autonomous and dependent on the local Ordinaries, might in time lead to a profound deviation in the primitive spirit and to a regrettable diversity. To ward off this danger, they saw nothing better than the appointment of Visitors who, at regular intervals, would make canonical visitations of the monasteries in order to check the abuses and watch over the preservation of the traditions of the Order. For her part, Saint Jane Frances, who had originally rejected the idea as an infringement on the authority of the local Ordinaries, finally accepted the suggestion. (Cf. Devos, *op. cit.*, 48 [1972], pp. 453-476.)

over us except that of our prelates, or any secret from them. If we wish to have our minds at rest, we must deal with them in complete trust and simplicity. Otherwise, we shall no longer be daughters of our blessed Father,<sup>5</sup> who left us this affection engraved on our hearts. Moreover, we possess a certain inclination and reverence that lead us to our superiors. This can only proceed from His grace and makes me hope for great blessings from that way of acting. That is why, most dear Father, seeing all the means of union proposed to us running counter in a certain sense to this authority, we could not accept any one of them. I trust that God will accomplish what cannot be done by means of formalities or by human prudence.

Up to the present, His Providence has directed and maintained us in perfect union and conformity. I hope that it will lead us to persevere in them by the same means. Our bond of holy charity will have more efficacy and strength in its meekness and holy liberty than in all the laws and obligations which could be prescribed. Such is my opinion, Reverend Father, which is in complete conformity with that in which our blessed Father left this life. Tell me whether I should not remain at peace in this respect.

I am writing to our Sisters about this matter, exhorting them, as best I can, to persevere in the path on which God has placed them, and to maintain their spirits in union and conformity hereafter through the same means they have practiced until now, which have kept them united and bound together. I am thinking, dear Father, only of preserving the memory of our communication, and of alerting the Superiors to be rather careful not to change or initiate anything in our institutions and customs, and to maintain holy union in every way they can with the other houses and especially with that of Annecy, the mother and mistress of all the others. By doing so, we shall conform in everything that it received from its holy founder as has been practiced up to now.<sup>6</sup> If you find this profitable, most dear Father, you could tell our Sisters to carry it out.

But please tell me your opinion of our Sisters there. I found them very much to my liking when we passed that way. May God grant them the grace to walk along their path with sincerity and simplicity and to render you their most humble obedience according to this spirit. Be always a true father and protector for us, I beg you, and, through your paternal

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<sup>5</sup>Saint Francis de Sales.

<sup>6</sup>These last two sentences, forming but one in the original, were either incomplete or poorly expressed.

*care, see to it that the wishes of the One Whom you honor in heaven are faithfully observed on earth by His daughters. That is the only good I wish for them; and for you, dearest Father, I wish the highest degree of holiness that can be acquired in this world.*

*Grant me the honor of considering me always (for such I am forever) your most humble. . . .*

#### 258. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LA CHAPELLE

May God bless you, Mademoiselle, for having gone to station your Sisters at the Hôtel-Dieu and for all that has ensued!<sup>1</sup> But, in the name of God, take care of yourself. You see the need people have of your weakness and what would become of your work without you.

I thank Our Lord, moreover, for the blessing He is granting your Sisters of being so good and generous. It seems that His goodness is making up for what you say are your deficiencies in their regard. I do not know any here who are suitable. I shall find out whether two or three young women — or any one of them — who are two leagues from here and who have been living in a most exemplary way for about a year or so, would like to dedicate themselves to that way of life.

As for what you tell me about your son, I think that you should not pay any attention at all to the suggestion about his leaving Paris. It is unimaginable how many incurable vices are contracted there by most of those who do so, unless the parents themselves send them for some special motive, as for the sake of a Jesuit relative or a doctor in the area. You must try gently and patiently to have him spend his time and do his studies industriously. However, I submit what I am telling you to your better judgment.

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**Letter 258.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Although they had been working at the Hôtel-Dieu for some time already, the Daughters of Charity were not yet living there. They took up residence in December 1636 in an apartment beside the hospital rented for them by the Ladies of Charity.

I beg you to take care of your health, being, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Fréneville, December 30, 1636

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in La Chapelle

**259. - TO JEAN DE FONTENEIL**

(Now 290a.)

**260. - TO SAINT LOUISE**

Friday, at five o'clock [Around 1637]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

Please let me know if you have any Sisters so that you may send two of them to the Pastor of Saint-Germain.<sup>2</sup> He wants them for his parish and earnestly requests that he may have them as soon as possible. I entreat Our Lord to send you some very good ones.

VINCENT DEPAUL

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**Letter 260.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The Charity of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, a parish in Paris, is mentioned for the first time in no. 278 which is dated 1637.

<sup>2</sup>Pierre Colombet was Pastor of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois from March 16, 1636 to July 1657.

260a. - M. COLOMBET TO SAINT VINCENT

[1637]<sup>1</sup>

*Jesus Mary*

*Monsieur,*

*Mlle Lamy considers it inappropriate to have two servants<sup>2</sup> at the beginning. It is sufficient for us to have one good one so as not to give cause for complaint to those who thought it would ruin the Charity, insofar as there are only five or six sick people at present. However, in a little while, when the matter is well settled, we shall add a companion according to your orders. If there were some way to have her right away, it would help us a great deal. Nevertheless, it would be better for us to wait so that we might have a really good one.*

*If there is need to send someone to La Villette,<sup>3</sup> please send this messenger and tell him what you want him to do.*

*I wish you a good day. I recommend myself to your prayers.*

*Next Sunday we shall have M. Pavillon preach a sermon concerning the Charity<sup>4</sup> in order to let everyone know what it is and to put an end to the rumors. I beg you most humbly to recommend the matter earnestly to God, and to let me know whether you consider this sermon appropriate. I am, Monsieur, your most humble and most obedient servant.*

COLOMBET

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**Letter 260a.** - Autograph letter. The original was in the possession (1931) of the Abbé Lorenzo of the Paris clergy. Published in the *Annales* (1932), pp. 5-6, it was reprinted in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, pp. 13-14. The latter text was used in this edition. There is a typed copy in the Archives of the Mission (Paris).

Saint Vincent passed this letter on to Saint Louise, writing a few lines below the text. (Cf. no. 260b.)

<sup>1</sup>The year the Confraternity of Charity was established at Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois.

<sup>2</sup>Servants of the poor or Daughters of Charity.

<sup>3</sup>Then a village in the suburbs, now a district in Paris.

<sup>4</sup>Sermon on the subject of the Confraternity of Charity.



260b. - TO SAINT LOUISE

The Pastor of Saint-Germain wrote me this letter.  
I gave a note to that good young woman whom you sent to me  
for Mme Goussault.  
Your son is doing well, and I am your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

260c. - JEAN-JACQUES OLIER TO SAINT VINCENT<sup>1</sup>

February 10, 1637

*Two weeks ago we held the fourth of our missions, during which more than two thousand general confessions were made although there were only six of us working, and towards the end, eight. We were overwhelmed by the people who arrived from six or eight leagues away in the country, notwithstanding the severity of the cold and the inconvenience of the place, which is a real desert. Those good people brought their provisions for three or four days and retired into the barns. There one could hear them conversing together about what they had heard at the sermon and the catechism instruction. And now, one can see the peasants and their wives giving the mission themselves to their families, and the shepherds and plowmen singing God's Commandments in the fields and questioning one another about what they learned during the mission. In fact, the nobility, for whom it seemed we were not speaking, using so coarse a language as we were, after having discharged their duty in a Christian*

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**Letter 260b.** - Autograph letter written at the bottom of M. Colombet's letter. (Cf. no. 260a.) It was published in the *Annales* (1932), p. 6, and later reprinted in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, p. 15. This edition uses the latter text. There is a typed copy in the Archives of the Mission (Paris).

**Letter 260c.** - Abelly (1664), pp. 33-34. This edition uses the text reprinted in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, p. 14.

<sup>1</sup>In 1636 Jean-Jacques Olier, a few zealous priests, and some members of Saint Vincent's Community began to give missions on the estates of the Abbey of Pèbrac. In a letter addressed to Saint Vincent and the priests of the Tuesday Conferences, Olier related the successes of a previous mission (cf. no. 226). The letter inserted here is the second known account of this type.

*and exemplary manner, were not able to let us leave without bursting into tears.*

*Five Huguenots abjured their heresy during this last mission. Four of them who had been avoiding us earlier came themselves to seek us out. And that, Gentlemen, to teach us, as you have often taught me, that the conversion of souls is the work of grace. We often place an obstacle in its way by our own spirit. God always wishes to work either in nothingness or through nothingness, that is, in those and through those who recognize and acknowledge their powerlessness and uselessness.*

261. - TO SISTER MARIE-EUPHROSINE TURPIN<sup>1</sup>

My very dear Sister,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The Commander<sup>2</sup> and our dear Mother Superior in the city<sup>3</sup> have done me the honor of proposing to me the idea Our Lord gave them of your rendering useful service to God at the Madeleine. Having considered the matter in all its details, I shall just say I think they are right [to wish] that, after you have weighed the matter before God, you might feel some inclination for it. Here are the reasons that prompt me to this opinion.

First of all, the work itself is very holy. It consists in lending a

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**Letter 261.** - The original autograph letter belongs to the Visitation of Amiens, 384 rue Saint-Fuscien.

<sup>1</sup>Assistant and directress at the Visitation of Angers. Sister Marie-Euphrosine Turpin, born in Paris in 1605, left the world at the age of nineteen, despite her father's opposition, to live enclosed in the first monastery of the Visitation, where she was professed on February 22, 1625. She was one of the Sisters who went to the monastery in the faubourg Saint-Jacques at the time of its foundation. "Our worthy Mother," we read in the book of professions from the first monastery (Arch. Nat. LL 1718, p. 6), "conceived such great esteem for her during a journey that she made to Paris, that she adopted her as a daughter of our holy source and chose her to work under her direction on the completion of the custom book, consulting her about the difficulties found in it." Sister Turpin did not leave the monastery of Angers until 1640 when she went to found that of Amiens, of which she became the first Superior. She died there on December 20, 1651, at the age of forty-six. (Cf. "Abrégé de la vie et des vertus de la très honorée Mère Marie-Euphrosine Turpin" in *Année Sainte*, vol. XII, pp. 395-414.)

<sup>2</sup>Noël Brulart de Sillery, an outstanding benefactor of the Visitation.

<sup>3</sup>Hélène-Angélique Lhuillier.

hand to souls who are being lost, who are incessantly dishonoring God and filling up hell, in order to withdraw them from the mass of perdition and help them live according to God. In a word, it consists in acting as their second redeemer, leading them, as it were by the hand, into the glory Our Lord has acquired for them by His precious blood, a work so great before God that He considered it worthy of His Son and the only one capable of drawing Him down to earth.

Secondly, this thought occurred to a great servant of His, to whom He gave the grace for your holy Order and for the Madeleine, and to our dear Mother,<sup>4</sup> whom you know, although perhaps not as well as I do, both of whom esteem you and have a singular affection for you.

Thirdly, it seems to me that Our Lord has given you a sufficient share in His spirit for you to realize the importance of this work, to have a predilection for it, and to devote yourself to it effectively.

Fourthly, I think that the work of your vocation there, as you described it to me, does not seem so important to the glory of God as the work here.

I am putting down for you only these four reasons why you should pay great attention to this proposal, although I could give you many others.

Now, I understand, I think, the contrary reasons which may make you question whether God wishes this:

Firstly, it is your Superior<sup>5</sup> who is sending you to another who is requesting you. To that I reply that you are a daughter of this house<sup>6</sup> and not of the faubourg, although you reside there. This house has the right, it seems to me, to recall you in its need. When an obedience from your Superior intervenes, you are obliged to come back. In the second place, the good Mother of the faubourg

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<sup>4</sup>The servant and Mother referred to here are Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Jane Frances Frémot de Chantal.

<sup>5</sup>Mother Marie-Agnès Le Roy, Superior of the second monastery, from which Marie-Euphrosine Turpin had been sent to Angers.

<sup>6</sup>The first monastery, where Sister Turpin had made her novitiate.

has told the Commander that she approved; that she would write to you about it herself — which she is doing; and that, although you are being asked for there, you are no less desired here.

Secondly, you will tell me that the work of the Madeleine seems unsuitable for the Sisters of Sainte-Marie, to which I shall reply that working for the salvation of souls is natural to the children of God. Since Our Lord judged the care of Mary Magdalen to be worthy of His goodness and that of the Blessed Virgin, there should be no question as to whether it is suitable for the Sisters of Sainte-Marie.

Thirdly, you will point out to me that maybe you are necessary in Angers. I shall respond that someone else will be provided who perhaps will not be less agreeable and useful there than you.

Fourthly, it will occur to you that perhaps you will not have enough intelligence to be of use in the direction of such a large and difficult house. My answer to that is that there will be two of you for the work, Our Lord and you, and with Him you can do all things.

Fifthly, your relatives will come to mind; perhaps they will not approve. But my reply is that we shall know that before the duty is explained to you. Even though there may be some repugnance, I think you should rise above it as you did so generously with regard to your journey to Angers.

Sixthly, if the thought of the world's esteem were to choose to attack you, which I doubt, reply to it, dear Sister, that far from people's having esteemed Sainte-Marie less as an establishment, or the young women who are there to devote themselves to the care of the house, I have, on the contrary, never heard so much good about your holy Order or about the young women who are at the Madeleine, than I have since they have been taking care of those poor creatures. We should consider as honorable everything Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin did. Since both devoted themselves to the care of Mary Magdalen, you can honorably assist in the salvation of these girls in the sight of God and of the world.

Such, dear Sister, are the objections that I think flesh and blood,

the world and the devil might put before you. The answers to them seem to me so reasonable and consonant with God's pleasure, that were I Sister Marie-Euphrosine and someone held for me the place I hold for you, and had as much charity for me as I have esteem and affection for you, I think I would bow my head and agree to this proposal. That, dear Sister, is what I hope you will do, unless Our Lord lets you know clearly that He wishes the contrary. In that case, I assent to whatever you do about it, as wholeheartedly as I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, dear Sister, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL  
i.s.c.M.

I beg you to present our most humble regards to our dear Mother Superior of Orléans<sup>7</sup> and to help me thank her for the charitable welcome she extended to me some time ago at her house.

Paris, eve of the feast of Saint Matthias,<sup>8</sup> 1637

*Addressed:* Dear Sister Marie-Euphrosine Turpin, religious of Sainte-Marie

## 262. - TO SAINT LOUISE

February 24 [1637]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

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<sup>7</sup>Claude-Espérance Jousse. She was Superior for two consecutive three-year terms, from May 21, 1634, to May 24, 1640, and took up office again at a later date.

<sup>8</sup>February 23.

**Letter 262.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Internal evidence, especially the reference to the Hospital for Incurables, prompts us to assign this date.

I most humbly beg your pardon for two things: first, for not having come to see you because of all the business I have; second, for not having the fireplace built for M. Le Gras, your son, through forgetfulness. See my wretchedness. If your heart did not have so much charity for me, where would I be? I hope you will forgive me. I have told Monsieur Soufliers to put him in a warm little room near one that M. Morennes,<sup>2</sup> one of the religious from this house, keeps heated. He will be able to get warm there.

Yesterday, I saw that good young woman about whom you wrote to me. I forgot to talk to her about her reading and sewing. She did not seem as rustic as the young woman who came with her. Please let me know what you said to them.

I told Mademoiselle Desbordes,<sup>3</sup> the treasurer at Saint-Leu,<sup>4</sup> that Barbe<sup>5</sup> needs to have a companion, at least as long as there are so many sick people in that parish. You will have to reflect on whom you can give her, and remember the Incurables.<sup>6</sup> Madame Fortia told Madame Goussault that they want the Sisters on condition that they be subject to you and can be changed.

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<sup>2</sup>Claude de Morennes, a religious from the old Saint-Lazare.

<sup>3</sup>She was perhaps related to M. Desbordes, Commissioner of Audit in Paris, with whom Saint Louise and Saint Vincent kept in contact. (Cf. *Ecrits spirituels*, L. 267 and L. 272.)

<sup>4</sup>A parish in Paris.

<sup>5</sup>Like many of the first Daughters who died before 1660, the family name of this Barbe is unknown to us, nor are there any facts concerning her life available.

<sup>6</sup>This hospital, founded by Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld on November 4, 1634, for the incurably ill, was nearly completed in April 1637. The plan to summon the Daughters of Charity there was never carried out. Pierre Camus, Bishop of Belley, spent the final years of his life there in the exercise of charity. He willed his possessions to the hospital and was buried there in 1652. In 1802, the men were transferred to the old convent of the Recollets in the faubourg Saint-Martin; the women left in 1870 to take up residence in the new hospice for incurables in Ivry. After standing empty for eight years, the hospital was transferred to Public Welfare and came to life again under the name of Laënnec Hospital. (Cf. Félibien, *op. cit.*, vol. IV, pp. 98 ff.; Lebeuf-Bournon, *op. cit.*, vol. VI, p. 255.) The Laënnec Hospital is across the rue de Sèvres from the present Saint-Lazare and abuts the garden of the present Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity on the rue du Bac.

I am sending the letter you misunderstood back to you. I promise to come and see you as soon as I can. Meanwhile, I bid you good day and am, Mademoiselle, your servant.

V. D.

Feast of Saint Matthias

263. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1636 and 1639]<sup>1</sup>

I am quite pleased about the retreat Madame de Liancourt wishes to make at your house. Mademoiselle Lamy wants to do the same. I would like her to meet Madame Goussault, the President's wife, there.

264. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1636 and 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Madame Goussault, the President's wife, and Mademoiselle Lamy are coming to make their little retreat at your house. Please assist them in doing so. Give them the schedule I gave to you and indicate to them the subjects for their meditations. Listen to the account of their good thoughts, which they will make for you in one another's presence, and see that they have reading at table

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**Letter 263.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 70.

<sup>1</sup>Dates of the installation of the Sisters in La Chapelle and the death of Madame Goussault. According to Gobillon (*op. cit.*, p. 78), the retreats for the ladies began at La Chapelle.

**Letter 264.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXVI, p. 121.

<sup>1</sup>Dates of the installation of the Sisters at La Chapelle and the death of Madame Goussault.

during their meals. Afterwards, they may entertain each other in a cheerful and modest way. The subject can be things that have happened to them during their retreat or that they have read in the Bible. If it is a nice day, they can go for a little walk after dinner. Except for these two times, they should observe silence.

It would be good for them to write down the principal perceptions they have had during meditation and for them to prepare their general confession for Wednesday. They can take their spiritual reading from the *Imitation of Jesus Christ* by Thomas a Kempis, stopping to reflect a short time on each sentence. They can take as well something from Granada relating to the subject of their meditation. They can also read a few chapters of the Gospels. But it would be well, on the day of their general confession, for you to give them the meditation from Granada's *Mémorial*, which is of a nature to excite contrition. For the rest, take care that they do not drive themselves too hard during these exercises. I beg Our Lord to give you His spirit for that purpose.

#### 265. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1636 and 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am afraid that Madame Goussault may become ill from sleeping above the street.<sup>2</sup> I think I heard her say that she is indisposed

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Letter 265. - Archives of the Mission (Paris), original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Dates of the installation of the Sisters at La Chapelle and the death of Madame Goussault.

<sup>2</sup>Madame Goussault was making her retreat at Saint Louise's home.



when that happens. Furthermore, it is to be feared that her relatives, especially her mother, might take it amiss.

There is no hurry for your retreat. It has not been very long since you recovered from an illness. I would be afraid that it would be too soon to expose yourself to that work. In the name of God, Mademoiselle, let us go slowly.

I am really afraid that I cannot come to your house and I am sorry to give you the trouble of getting a carriage to come here. However, if you can come tomorrow around eight or nine o'clock, you will be most welcome. But, in the name of God, do not rush.

As for those young women, I do not quite understand what you are telling me about them. We shall discuss the matter at our first meeting. At that time, please take the trouble of returning our rope. In the meantime, be cheerful and careful of your health. Remember that I am, in the love of Our Lord,<sup>3</sup> your servant.

V. D. P.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

## 266. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1636 and 1642]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

It seems to me that you could not begin your retreat at a more suitable time. Most men and women religious are making theirs right now. Please begin then tomorrow, Monday. Three half-

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<sup>3</sup>At first, the Saint had written: "that I am, to the full extent of my affection." Then, finding his sentence too tender, he crossed out those words and replaced them with the ones found in the text above.

**Letter 266.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The span of years during which Saint Louise lived in La Chapelle. One cannot help remarking that the general tone of the letter is surprising at such a late date.

quarters of an hour per day are sufficient for your mental prayer, half an hour for each meditation, two in the morning at eight and ten thirty, and another at four o'clock.<sup>2</sup>

I shall most gladly hear your confession in La Chapelle. Will you be able to get a carriage? If not, I shall try to go to Saint-Victor,<sup>3</sup> but it will not be done without some difficulty because of the place. End on Saturday evening; go to Mass every day. Have people told that you are busy, and put off those who need to see you until immediately after dinner and be brief. Go to Holy Communion next Thursday, and draw only on the subjects of meditation which the Bishop of Geneva<sup>4</sup> puts at the beginning and the end of his *Introduction*.<sup>5</sup> Divide them so that they will be sufficient for you and do all of them. You will be able to do some of them twice according to the attraction Our Lord may give you. Read the New Testament in addition to the other readings I suggested to you. Every other day, write to me briefly about what is taking place and about your disposition of body and spirit. Above all, try not to rush around, but do everything gently as you can imagine the good Bishop of Geneva did.

I am not asking you to remember me in your prayers, because I have no doubt that, after little Le Gras,<sup>6</sup> you put me in first place; not that I deserve it, but the knowledge you have of my need for prayers and the charity Our Lord has given you for me lead me to hope that you do so.

Adieu then, Mademoiselle. Take care of yourself in such a way during this retreat that you will allow us the possibility of advising you to make others.

I almost forgot to tell you not to overburden yourself with rules of devotion, but persist in doing well those you have, your daily

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<sup>2</sup>Such is the text of the original letter. The sentence does not make any sense unless we read *three half hours* instead of *three half-quarters of an hour*.

<sup>3</sup>Probably at the Bons-Enfants, rue Saint-Victor.

<sup>4</sup>Saint Francis de Sales.

<sup>5</sup>*Introduction to the Devout Life*.

<sup>6</sup>Saint Louise's son Michel.

actions, your work; in a word, let everything revolve around doing well what you are doing. And do not entertain either those thoughts of singularity that bothered you before. That is the evil spirit trying to mislead you.

Well now, I shall end here with the prayer I am offering to Our Lord that He Himself may be your guide during your retreat, and His holy Mother as well. I am, in their love, your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

267. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LA CHAPELLE

Mademoiselle,

May the devotion of Our Lord's disciples assembled to pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit be impressed on your heart forever!<sup>1</sup>

I would have been quite happy to hear that good young woman from Saint-Benoît,<sup>2</sup> but how can I, considering the trip I have to make? Please assure her that I shall pray for her and recommend me to her prayers. I think it would be good for you to have her heard by an extraordinary confessor. M. Lambert or M. Soufliers could render her that service. If you send her to M. Lambert, M. Pillé could hear the confession of that good poor man from Picardy when one of the above-mentioned priests comes to hear her. May God return to you the charity you are doing her!

Isabelle<sup>3</sup> would do well at Saint-Paul, but if that good priest has to bring the Pastor<sup>4</sup> of Saint-Paul to understand what you are

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**Letter 267.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The letter was written on the Sunday preceding the feast of Pentecost.

<sup>2</sup>A parish in Paris.

<sup>3</sup>Elisabeth Martin, a Daughter of Charity.

<sup>4</sup>Nicolas Mazure, a Canon of Coutances, born in the diocese of Avranches, ordained a

telling me, you must wait until I return. In any case, from what he told me, there is no hurry.

I am consoled by your charity for Marie, but please do not go and endanger yourself. Could not that good young woman Isabelle do what is necessary?

If the ordinands come to Saint-Lazare, M. de la Salle will be teaching the lesson and will be very busy; if not, he will be able to work on the establishment of the Charity in La Chapelle. In his absence, M. Lambert can give the sermon, unless you prefer to postpone it until Corpus Christi.

Exercise your authority and be quite cheerful. Be assured that everything you told me is temptation, and that I am within and without, now and for eternity, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Sunday evening, May 24, 1637

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in La Chapelle

268. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around May 24, 1637]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have just arrived and am about to leave for Pontoise, returning

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priest, April 17, 1632. He replaced his uncle, Guillaume Mazure, who died March 12, 1633, as Pastor of the parish of Saint-Paul. In 1664 he exchanged his parish with André Hameau, a Doctor of the Sorbonne, for the Abbey of Saint-Jean-en-Vallée in the diocese of Chartres. He died June 25, 1685, as Dean of the Faculty of Theology.

**Letter 268.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>It would seem that this letter should be placed near no. 267 because of the reference to some problem at the parish of Saint-Paul.

tomorrow evening and setting out again the next day for a place near Dourdan.<sup>2</sup> I hope to be back from there Thursday or Friday of next week. I commend myself, meanwhile, to your prayers.

You can recall Marie<sup>3</sup> without saying anything about it to the Ladies. It would be wise to postpone the Saint-Paul matter. Please answer Madame Pelletier for both of us.

The pen is being taken out of my hand. Adieu, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

269. - TO ANTOINE COLEE, SUPERIOR, IN TOUL<sup>1</sup>

1637

I have heard that your bread was not well made. Please have it done by a baker, if you can find one, for the most important thing is to have good bread. It would also be well to vary the food sometimes . . . to relieve the strain on poor nature which tires of seeing the same things all the time. You would also be wise to recommend cleanliness and neatness to the brothers, both with regard to the kitchen and to the refectory.

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<sup>2</sup>Principal town of a canton in Essonne.

<sup>3</sup>Marie Joly.

**Letter 269.** - Collet, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 314, note.

<sup>1</sup>In speaking of this letter, Collet says: "This is how the Saint wrote in 1637 to M. Barry, who had recently been appointed Superior of the house in Toul." Now in 1637, M. Barry, who was never Superior in that town, was neither a priest nor a member of the Congregation of the Mission. The Superior in Toul at the time was Antoine Colée. He was born in Amiens, October 28, 1610, entered the Congregation in 1630, and was ordained a priest in 1635. He was Superior of the house in Toul from 1637 to 1638 and left the Company in 1646.

270. - TO MADAME GOUSSAULT

[August 25] 1637<sup>1</sup>

Madame,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I just this minute received your letter. It gave me consolation because it allowed me to see the state of your health and of the mission. I thank God for both and for your willingness to add to your other good works that of welcoming M. Le Roux and Mademoiselle Le Gras. If the latter is able to come and see you, I think it will be time well spent. I shall write to her about it.

As for the office of bailiff, the Prior wants it for a nephew of his, who is a capable and upright man. You may believe that, if the matter were solely up to us, you could have anything you might want.<sup>2</sup>

M. Cuissot<sup>3</sup> put something in his letter that makes me wonder whether the Missionaries are supplying their own food. *Bon Dieu!* Madame, could you have done this wrong to the Mission and could M. [Cuissot]<sup>4</sup> have become negligent in that regard? I am writing to him and asking him, upon receiving my letter, to begin

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**Letter 270.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The words, "he is still new," referring to Gilbert Cuissot, leave no doubt about the year.

<sup>2</sup>The affair in question is the position of bailiff at Saint-Lazare. According to the terms of the contract of January 7, 1632, Saint Vincent could confer the position of bailiff "only in the presence and with the advice and consent . . . of the Prior." The Prior was Adrien Le Bon.

<sup>3</sup>Gilbert Cuissot, born November 5, 1607, had been a priest for six years when he entered the Congregation of the Mission on May 14, 1637. After directing the house of Luçon, he was appointed Superior in La Rose (1640-1644), then at the Collège des Bons-Enfants (October 14, 1644-1646), where he made his vows November 11, 1644. We find him next at the seminary of Le Mans (1646) and at Saint-Lazare (1646-1647). He was director of the Cahors seminary from 1647 to 1662, and in charge of the Richelieu house from 1662 to 1666. He declared in writing that, at the time of the election of Saint Vincent's successor, because he was hesitant about voting for René Alméras whose state of health left much to be desired, the Saint appeared to him and determined his choice. He also declared that in 1662, while exorcising a possessed woman, he drew from the demon precious avowals concerning the Founder's holiness and the reward reserved by God for Missionaries faithful to their vocation. He died in 1666.

<sup>4</sup>The manuscript reads "Buisot." A correction is necessary because Antoine Buisot had entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1630.

serving our ordinary fare. He is still new and I did not speak to him before his departure. The fault is all mine alone.

We have six or seven sick people here in the house, most of them with dysentery. Please speak to the good God about them.

I am, in His love, so long as you are quite cheerful, Madame, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, feast of Saint Louis

*Addressed:* Madame Goussault, the President's wife.

271. - LASCARIS, GRAND MASTER OF THE ORDER OF MALTA,<sup>1</sup>  
TO SAINT VINCENT

*Monsieur,*

*I was notified that the venerable Bailiff de Sillery had chosen you to assist him in making his tour of inspection of the churches and parishes dependent on the great priory. To that task you have already begun to devote effectively your care and toil for the instruction of those who were in dire need of it.<sup>2</sup> This impels me to express to you by these lines my most affectionate thanks and to ask you to continue this work, since it has no object other than the advancement of the glory of God and the honor and reputation of this Order.*

*With all my heart I beg the goodness of God to be pleased to reward your zeal and charity with His graces and blessings, and to give me the means of showing you how much I acknowledge myself your. . . .*

*Grand Master Lascaris of Malta*

*September 7, 1637*

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**Letter 271.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXXII, 1st ed., p. 151.

<sup>1</sup>Paul Lascaris of the Lascaris family, emperors of Nicaea, was born in Castellar in 1560, elected Grand Master of the Knights of Saint John of Malta in 1636, and died in 1657.

<sup>2</sup>These visits were accompanied by missions.

272. - TO CHARLES DE MONTCHAL  
ARCHBISHOP OF TOULOUSE

(Now 344a.)

273. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around November 1637]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

If you can give one of your Sisters to the Hôtel-Dieu in Henriette's<sup>2</sup> place, I think you will be doing her no small charity, for I feel that she cannot bear being denied that trip without becoming ill.<sup>3</sup> If you do not have anyone to replace her in her absence, God's Will seems to be that she wait, whatever may come of it. But I would be relieved, I think, if she could have this consolation.

Please excuse me for not having been able to see your Sisters. I shall do so at the first opportunity. You tell me nothing about your health. If you have only what you had before, I hope that it will bring you some benefit and that you will be completely cured. I have not been able either to look into that matter concerning the Duchesse de Liancourt.<sup>4</sup> I shall do so this evening, which I hope

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**Letter 273.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter seems closely connected with no. 276, which itself has points in common with nos. 274, 275, and 277. They were written when the Motherhouse was in La Chapelle and during the lifetime of Madame Goussault, that is between 1636 and September 1639. Since no. 275 is dated November 1, and since on November 1, 1636, Saint Vincent was not in Paris, the choice is limited to the years 1637 and 1638. By comparing nos. 272 and 276 with no. 278, which cannot be from 1638, it is easy to conclude that they should be placed together and, therefore, that they are all from 1637.

<sup>2</sup>Henriette Gesseume.

<sup>3</sup>Henriette was asking permission to make a visit to her family.

<sup>4</sup>Probably the matter of the Liancourt chaplains.



will be a good one for you. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Tuesday evening

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

274. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around November 1637]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I was very glad to hear from you and to learn that you are feeling better. I beg Our Lord to cure you completely and I ask you to do all you can in that regard.

Madame Mussot told you the truth about Jeanne's mistress, but not about that good young woman, who was quite pleased with such an opportunity. Nevertheless, I think it would be wise for you to give good Madame Mussot that satisfaction with regard to Nicole and for you to take the opportunity of sending her, starting today.

But, *mon Dieu*, what shall we say about that poor Sister who has had a relapse? Nothing indeed, except that we must adore the all lovable Providence of God.

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

V. DEPAUL

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**Letter 274.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>As noted in no. 273, Coste deduced that Saint Vincent wrote this letter most probably in November of 1637.

I think you would be wise to act in the way you mentioned to me in your letter.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

275. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[November 1, 1637]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am very pleased with what you wrote to me about those good young women from Liancourt, especially about the one who knows how to make lace. She will be able to teach that to the poor people and it will serve to draw them to spiritual things. Send them, therefore, whenever you wish.

I see no need at present for Madame Goussault to be with you when you speak to Madame Mussot or to that poor woman. If neither one profits from what you say to them, you can call her in, unless you are meeting at her house and send for them to come there. But that will cause a great deal of delay, I fear. However, if the gentleness of your spirit needs a dash of vinegar, borrow a little from Our Lord's spirit. O Mademoiselle, how well He knew how to find a bittersweet remark when it was needed!

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

VINCENT DEPAUL

All Saint's Day, in the evening

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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**Letter 275.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>As noted in no. 273, Coste deduced that Saint Vincent wrote this letter most probably in 1637.

276. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around November 1637]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I can give you no reply concerning Madame de Liancourt's priests, except that I think she will not find any for the little she is offering; or, if she does, they will leave her when they find something better, unless good Monsieur Bourdoise will give her some of his men.<sup>2</sup> May God be pleased to preserve them in the style of life they now have, as I trust He shall because of His goodness. Nevertheless, in order to perpetuate the work, the income must be in securities. Otherwise, within fifty years, its fund will be reduced by half. The cost of things doubles at least every fifty years.

I think it would be wise for you to write to Madame Mussot again about that good woman, so that she can tell you how the matter was resolved. As for Henriette, I am waiting for Monsieur de Lamoignon<sup>3</sup> so that I can talk to him about it; or else you will have done with it sooner by writing to Mademoiselle Desbordes and asking her to come and see you so that you can tell her about a matter you are reluctant to put into writing. I think it would be

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**Letter 276.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Saint Vincent wrote this letter most probably in November of 1637 as Coste noted in no. 273.

<sup>2</sup>The problem of chaplains for the estates of Madame de Liancourt was first mentioned in no. 224. Coste appended to that letter a footnote, note 7, in which he gave the history of this question.

<sup>3</sup>Guillaume de Lamoignon, Marquis de Basville and Counselor in the Parlement of Paris, was a very devout man of outstanding character. In 1644 he became Master of Requests and, in 1658, First President of the Parlement of Paris. When announcing his appointment as First President, Louis XIV said to him: "Had I known a better man, a worthier subject, I would have chosen him." He was a friend and patron of literary men, especially of Boileau, who addressed to him his sixth epistle and wrote the *Lutrin* at his request. He was a close friend of Saint Vincent and gave hospitality to the Missionaries who fell ill at Etampes while caring for the poor. His mother and sister were very active in the Saint's works. He died December 10, 1677. (*Vie de M. le premier président de Lamoignon*, Paris, 1781.)

well for you to do this sooner rather than later, while the priest is still sick.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I saw your son yesterday. I think he is more disposed to the ecclesiastical state. Please let me know if you told him what you wrote me concerning Mademoiselle Poulailion.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Last night, I found this letter that I thought I had sent to you; I wrote it three days ago. If I can do so soon, I shall have the happiness of seeing you in La Chapelle.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

#### 277. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Monday morning, at the Bons-Enfants  
[Around November 1637]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

A number of places ask me for priests quite often, but I know few whom I can give wholeheartedly, especially to Madame de Liancourt, because of the conditions she desires. If M. Bourdoise cannot give her any, I think she would do well to ask the Bishop of Beauvais<sup>2</sup> for some, but not the Bishop of Rouen<sup>3</sup> for La Roche-Guyon.<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to ask any bishop.

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**Letter 277.** - Pémartin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 28, letter 545.

<sup>1</sup>As noted in no. 273, Coste deduced that Saint Vincent wrote this letter most probably in November of 1637.

<sup>2</sup>Augustin Potier.

<sup>3</sup>François de Harlay de Champvallon.

<sup>4</sup>The Duc de Liancourt was Seigneur of the estate of La Roche-Guyon (Val-d'Oise), which became a duchy-peerage in 1643.

I am very sorry that I was unable to give you the time you wanted in La Chapelle, and that I shall again be unable to do so if you come to Paris on Wednesday, to the room your Sisters have at Saint-Nicolas. I am leaving this morning to go and visit Madame de Herse, the President's wife, twelve leagues from here. She is ill and is complaining about me. I shall not return perhaps for four or five days. When I get back, you can take a trip to the city, or I shall come to La Chapelle.

In the meantime, I commend myself to your prayers and am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your. . . .

I praise God that you got out of that great difficulty so easily. Please take care of yourself for God's sake.

277a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around November 1637]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I was purged yesterday, which was the reason why I did not send you a reply, that and a little difficulty I had in the afternoon. I saw good Madame Goussault the day before yesterday. She was cheerful enough at the outset of her illness. I inquired about her yesterday and she sent word that she was not in great pain, but that they had bled her with her foot in water. I am going to see her in a little while.

Your indisposition prevents me from telling you that you would be doing her a charity by going to see her. I know very well that your presence would be a great consolation to her and do her

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**Letter 277a.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written during one of the illnesses of Madame Goussault, who died September 20, 1639. In his corrections in vol. VIII, Coste gave this date and suggested this placement of the letter.

good, but I am afraid you might fall ill if you went to see her. If you could stand the carriage without discomfort, fine! But, in the name of God, if you are ever so little indisposed, please do not go; it would upset her.

I am going to visit Madame de Marillac.<sup>2</sup> If she follows my advice, she will conclude the matter. It will be well suited to her piety to mortify herself in this satisfaction she desires. It will be a source of blessing in the affair on her son's<sup>3</sup> side. That is what I plan to say to her. But please do not tell her how I feel, until I have seen her and told you the outcome of our interview today. The Bishop of Beauvais mentioned seeing the two of us together about it. We shall see.

Good day, Mademoiselle. Please recommend a matter to Our Lord. I am, in His love, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Sunday, at half past seven

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

278. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around November 1637]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Monsieur du Coudray had nothing to say to you about your son,

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<sup>2</sup>Marie de Creil, widow of René de Marillac. She later left the world to become a Carmelite.

<sup>3</sup>Michel de Marillac, Counselor in the Parlement of Paris and cousin of Saint Louise. He was arranging his marriage to Jeanne Potier, niece of the Bishop of Beauvais, Augustin Potier. Their first child, René, was baptized February 18, 1639.

**Letter 278.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>In January 1638, François du Coudray was assigned to Toul, while Benoît Bécu was sent to

nor do I, except to find out whether he is pleased with his stay at the Bons-Enfants. The room above the door, which has a fireplace, is empty and the lady who takes care of guests asked me if we would be taking it for him. And what I am saying to you is said frankly. Let me know then what you wish. M. du Coudray was not asked to talk to you about this or about anything else concerning him. Be assured that he is no trouble for us, but that I would be troubled if he were not satisfied with his accommodations and were to change them, unless it were for the better, which I do not believe to be the case.

A blind girl from Argenteuil,<sup>2</sup> who directs the Charity in that place, came to see me accompanied by a cousin of Barbe from Saint-Leu. She begged me to consent to her<sup>3</sup> joining the religious order recently established there,<sup>4</sup> but I held out firmly against it. Nevertheless, she went over my head. It was her trip to her brother's wedding that did it. Blessed be God! We must accept the order of His Providence and pray for the good young woman, that God may be pleased to grant her perseverance. And we must notify whomever you are sending in her place.

I really think you would do well to send Marie<sup>5</sup> from Saint-Paul to Saint-Germain.<sup>6</sup> In my opinion, we should not keep Nicole of Saint-Sauveur in any one place for very long. But whom will you have for Saint-Leu if Henriette is going off to Villers,<sup>7</sup> as you tell me and as she asked me yesterday?

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Richelieu. As noted in no. 273, Coste used this information to establish the dates for nos. 273 to 278.

<sup>2</sup>A locality in Val-d'Oise.

<sup>3</sup>Barbe from Saint-Leu parish in Paris.

<sup>4</sup>The convent of the Bernardines founded in 1635 by Denis Desnault, chaplain to Queen Anne of Austria and Seigneur de Robiolles.

<sup>5</sup>Perhaps Marie Joly.

<sup>6</sup>Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois.

<sup>7</sup>Villers-sous-Saint-Leu.

Today I am sending M. Benoît<sup>8</sup> to see his good sister,<sup>9</sup> whom I greet affectionately. I am a little concerned about that good young woman and about poor Madame Goussault, whom I saw last evening. Her fever persists and her stomach is bothering her. However, she was a little better than the day before, but they tell me that her condition changes frequently. They were to bleed her in half an hour. I am not telling you to commend her to God; I am sure that you do not fail to do so. I told her that your indisposition was keeping you in bed. I beg you to stay there and not even to consider going to see her.

I am not worried about you, by the grace of God. I was thinking of coming to see you yesterday, but I was overwhelmed with company and would have had to break my appointment with two ladies in order to come to La Chapelle. However, I would be very happy to know your present state of health. Mine is better, thank God, and I am planning to go to the country as you advised. Our Tuesday meeting and M. de la Marguerie's<sup>10</sup> retreat have prevented me from doing so up to now. Did you send me word that you would like to see me before then?

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

You could not go to Mass today without aggravating your illness. Please hear it from your bed, as the *Introduction to the Devout Life* teaches, and do so calmly, without protesting. Is it not at your house that Marie Bécu is ill?

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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<sup>8</sup>Benoît Bécu, born in Braches (Somme), March 21, 1602, was ordained a priest in 1627 and entered the Congregation of the Mission, May 14, 1637. In 1639 he went to found the establishment of La Rose and returned a few months later to Richelieu, where he was still living in 1646.

<sup>9</sup>Marie Bécu, a Daughter of Charity.

<sup>10</sup>Elie Laisné, Sieur de la Marguerie et de la Dourville, Ordinary State Councillor. After the death of his wife, he entered the priesthood, and died October 3, 1656.



279. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around November 1637]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Please do not offer me any excuses for having sent your son to the collège;<sup>2</sup> you have every right to do so. I welcome him, trusting in Providence; and, should it prove necessary, please send him here to this house. Everything is at your disposition and his. I am very happy to see that he is worried about missing his classes. That is a step in the right direction.

I saw M. Holden yesterday. We talked a little about the spirit of martyrdom, but the next time it will be about charity which is so essential to an apostolic spirit.

If Brother Jean's sister<sup>3</sup> is suitable, I think the poor boy will consider her fortunate to belong to the Charity. I shall discuss it with her and shall speak to your Sisters tomorrow afternoon here in our house. It would be difficult for me to go somewhere else.

If Barbe wants to enter a religious order, please invite her very calmly to make up her mind about it. She will soon tire of it, or the order of her.

As for that other young woman from the Hôtel-Dieu, it is better to dismiss her sooner rather than later. The longer you wait, the more commotion her exit will cause. Be well informed about the truth of the matter and make it clear to the others that she is not staying and that she has been quite happy to be sheltered for a time so as to enter a religious order. And if Barbe perseveres, let her thank her cousin and tell her, as she has told you, that she has

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**Letter 279.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written after no. 278, whose date Coste established as November 1637.

<sup>2</sup>To the Collège des Bons-Enfants.

<sup>3</sup>Several coadjutor brothers were named Jean. The Saint may have been referring to Jean Jourdain or Jean Houïe, Jean Bécu's brother-in-law.

given herself to God in the person of the poor. I have not been able to talk to Barbe; I am too busy.

I am quite pleased with the report and shall follow it up. I shall send for the Sisters from Saint-Laurent.

I think that the long trip is postponed completely. I shall make a short one — just four or five days — two or three days from now, if Our Lord so desires.

I am, in His love, Mademoiselle, your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

280. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around November 1637]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have an important appointment today around three o'clock, a meeting that may last until dark. I am, however, going to pass by Madame Goussault's house; I have not seen her for three days. Her fever is not so high today. Nevertheless, they bled her this morning. It is a double-tertian fever<sup>2</sup> and today is the most trying day.

I am sorry I cannot come to see good Sister Marie.<sup>3</sup> I shall do so tomorrow, God willing. However, I am being remembered to her by her brother<sup>4</sup> whom I am sending to visit her.

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**Letter 280.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The content of this letter, the illnesses of Madame Goussault and Marie Bécu, prompted Coste to believe that it was written around the same time as no. 278.

<sup>2</sup>A malarial type fever marked by two paroxysms recurring every three days.

<sup>3</sup>Marie Bécu.

<sup>4</sup>Benoît Bécu.

I was afraid that, if you returned to Madame Goussault's, you might have a relapse as you did after your first visit. Increase your strength; you need it, or, in any case, the public does.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

281. - ABBE DE SAINT-CYRAN<sup>1</sup> TO SAINT VINCENT

*Dissay, November 20, 1637*

*Monsieur,*

*For a month, since the last time I had the honor of seeing you, I have been ill with a persistent indisposition which I think I picked up from a*

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**Letter 281.** - François Pinthereau, *Les reliques de Messire Jean du Verger de Hauranne, abbé de Saint-Cyran, extraites des ouvrages qu'il a composez et donnez au public* (Louvain: Vve Gravius, 1646), pp. 347 ff.

Jean du Verger de Hauranne, Abbé de Saint-Cyran, was born in Bayonne in 1581. The Abbé de Saint-Cyran had made the acquaintance of Saint Vincent in Paris around 1622 and was not long in striking up a friendship with him. According to his nephew, Barcos, he had supposedly rendered some important services to the Saint, and the Congregation of the Mission was in some measure indebted to him for the possession of the Collège des Bons-Enfants and for Saint-Lazare (*Défense de feu M. Vincent de Paul*, p. 11), as well as for the Bull of approbation obtained in the Roman court. What is certain is that their meetings, rather frequent while the Saint was living at the Bons-Enfants, became more rare after 1632 and almost ceased from 1634 on. It is easy to guess the reason. As long as the Saint retained some hope of leading Saint-Cyran back to the traditional thinking of the Church, he agreed to listen to opinions which wounded his inmost feelings, but when he became convinced that this drastically twisted mind would yield neither to his entreaties nor to his reasoning, he preferred to meet with him less frequently. In August 1637, almost on the eve of the day when Saint-Cyran was to leave for Poitou, Saint Vincent went to his home to see him and implored him to renounce the four errors being attributed to him. Seeing the emotion aroused by his words, he quietly apologized and asked him to accept a horse for the journey. It was not until November 20, 1637, that the Abbé justified himself in the above letter. A few months later, on May 15, 1638, Saint-Cyran was arrested and imprisoned in the Château de Vincennes. Among the papers found in his home was a copy of the letter of November 20. In his desire to accumulate charges against his prisoner, Richelieu could not overlook the testimony of such a well-informed witness as Saint Vincent. He had him convoked before M. de Laubardemont, Master of Requests; then, upon the Saint's refusal to reply to a lay judge, he himself interrogated him. The Jansenists claimed that the Saint finally appeared before Lescot, the Cardinal's confessor.

dying person I attended one whole night.<sup>2</sup> Not knowing what might be the outcome of my illness, which I was bearing without staying in bed, various thoughts came to my mind in the event that God should be pleased to bring me to the point of death. Because the last conversation you had with me was on my mind at that time, I thought I would write and let you know that, by the grace of God, my heart was in no way burdened by those four things you came to my house to tell me; I had others in my soul of which you were unaware.<sup>3</sup> Because of the latter I have reason to fear God's judgments, which may be mitigated in some way by my professing those Catholic truths which used to pass for lies and untruths among those who preferred the gleam and glitter rather than the light and truth of virtue. Your deep-seated disposition of humility for believing what people would have you see in Holy Scripture makes me quite aware that there was nothing easier than to make you consent, by the witness even of your own eyes, to what you now detest as errors. But, in the wake of your fraternal admonition, when I heard you find fault, and even add to the other four that fifth correction, because in the past I had told you in private that I wanted to do a favor for you and your whole house, I judged that it was not the time for self-defense or for enlightening you, even by tangible and skillful proofs, concerning those matters you disapprove even to the point of boldly condemning them without understanding them. That is why, with the great desire and restlessness I felt inside me to talk to you and make you see the falseness of the things for which you reproached me, I held back as though suspended, so that I might excuse you for having abandoned me in the time of persecution, like a criminal, rather than for any bad opinion you may have had of me. I easily bore that on the part of a man who had long honored me with his friendship and who, in Paris, was considered a perfectly upright man, which belief

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They published an account of his deposition, written, so they say, in his own hand. This document, which we believe is authentic, is certainly altered or incomplete. Saint-Cyran's imprisonment was the personal work of Richelieu. As soon as the Cardinal was dead, Louis XIII allowed the prisoner to communicate with people outside. This measure of clemency was soon followed by a second: on February 16, 1643, Saint-Cyran was set free. He did not enjoy the royal favor for long; a cerebral hemorrhage carried him off on October 11, 1643. It was said, based on an equivocal sentence of Barcos, that Vincent attended his funeral. The information is incorrect; Barcos himself declared that he had been misunderstood. (Cf. Pierre Coste, *Rapports de saint Vincent de Paul avec l'abbé de Saint-Cyran* [Toulouse: A. Nauze, 1914].)

<sup>2</sup>Madame d'Andilly, (Examination of Saint-Cyran, question 9). Under the examination ordered by Cardinal Richelieu (cf. vol. XIII, no. 33), Saint-Cyran provides us with the information contained in this and the following footnotes.

<sup>3</sup>His sins. (Examination, question 12.)

could not be shaken without wounding charity. All I had left was the astonishment in my soul that you, who profess to be so gentle and reserved everywhere, had taken the opportunity of a general protest brought against me by a triple cabal<sup>4</sup> and for well-known interests to say things to me that you would not have dared to think before. Thus, instead of my expecting consolation from you, because of the situation, you made so bold as to join the others in overwhelming me, adding over and above to the excesses of the others the fact that you undertook to come and say it to me in my own home, which none of the others had dared to do.

I thought I would be failing in the candor of friendship and even in the charity of the Gospel if, after I had allowed sufficient time to go by to dispel the anger which had me all worked up, I did not make this complaint to you alone, writing from the house<sup>5</sup> of an eminent bishop.<sup>6</sup> He will give quite different testimony of me, if need be, in all Italy where he is known, not to mention France where, by the grace of God, I have no need of it. When the faction no longer exists and when the gross interests—those springs of the intense emotions and the speeches delivered about me—have passed, I shall remain in this matter as spotless and irreproachable before men as I claim to be before God. Since He is the essential Truth, He is especially opposed to all kinds of ignorance and falsehood proceeding from such situations. The Duchesse de Longueville,<sup>7</sup> who had been stirred up against me, gave me reason to say this, without my being deluded by the copious reparation she offered me a month before her death in the presence of an individual of noble extraction who directs several other women who are not unknown to you. After her, Cardinal de la Valette<sup>8</sup> was informed in detail of the accusations; he scoffed at them and, without my saying a word, spoke out so advantageously in my behalf about the things that were being attributed to me, that I would be embarrassed to repeat it. Whenever you wish to know what he said, I would prefer to designate to you one of your friends to

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<sup>4</sup>Abbé de Prières, Sébastien Zamet, Bishop of Langres, and the Jesuits, joined by a few Oratorian Fathers. (Examination, question 91.)

<sup>5</sup>Saint-Cyran was writing his letter from Dissay, a commune in Vienne, near Poitiers. Louis Chasteigner had a country house in that locality. (Examination, question 94.)

<sup>6</sup>Henri-Louis Chasteigner de la Rochepey, Bishop of Poitiers. (Examination, question 94.)

<sup>7</sup>Louise de Bourbon, sister of the last Comte de Soissons, wife of Henri II, Duc de Longueville. A great friend of Port-Royal, she died September 9, 1637.

<sup>8</sup>Louis de la Valette de Nogaret had occupied the See of Toulouse from 1614 to 1627; he received the Cardinal's hat in 1621. His military temperament prompted him to accept the command of the King's armies, which he led into Germany, Holland, and Italy. He died in Rivoli, near Turin, September 28, 1639.

whom he said it. I daresay there is not one among the prelates who frequent your house with whom I do not remain in agreement and whom I could not bring to accept all my opinions and sanction them with his approbation whenever I might choose to speak to him about them at leisure. Brilliant men as they are and, through their predecessors, the true fount of all the discipline that must be observed with regard to souls, far from being opposed to my opinions, they would, on the contrary, be delighted with them and thank me. I am telling you this just to let you know with what assurance I speak, having no intention of disturbing the honor they render you or the peace you enjoy in their conversation and company. For, with regard to your house, you believed you were doing it a good turn by preventing the favor I wished to do for it. Far from my being angry about the matter, I thank you warmly for saving me the trouble, without perhaps having diminished for all that the pleasure God knows I took in the willingness He had given me to serve you as much in spiritual as in temporal matters. You are well aware, however, that I offered my service without interfering in the initial steps by which you established yourself in the location where you are. I would not, for anything in the world, have wished to take part in those proceedings.<sup>9</sup> That fact, more than anything else, should make you realize how little attached I am to my own opinion and how little inclined I am to bow with my friends against the judgment of my conscience which would never permit me to do such things. I upheld my convictions in a public debate to the point of bringing about a change of opinion on the part of that man to whom you are deeply obligated.<sup>10</sup> I cite this only out of necessity and on this occasion alone to remind you of my condescension and to bring you to discount the impression others have given you of my inflexibility and severity. For I daresay that so little do I deserve that reputation in the judgment of those who know me and of the truth, that if I were to mention your four or five reproaches to that same person of distinction and his colleague, they would laugh at them and, in that way, without saying a word, they would calm all the anger I have felt because of them. I have great reason, Monsieur, to forgive you for them, and to say to you in my heart some of the words the Son of God said to those who mistreated Him. I trust, and I say it confidently, that those will not be the things that cause me to blush before His judgment. On the contrary, I expect some

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<sup>9</sup>At Saint-Lazare. It was not that the establishment of Saint Vincent at Saint-Lazare was distasteful to Saint-Cyran, but he made it a matter of principle not to get involved in other people's temporal affairs. (Examination, questions 37 and 108.)

<sup>10</sup>Jérôme Bignon, Advocate General in the Paris Parlement. (Examination, questions 111 and 112.)

*indulgence from His mercy because of them, if I persist in upholding and adoring in my heart what the succession of the apostolic doctrine, by which we thwart heretics and without which the Church cannot subsist, has been teaching me for twenty-five or thirty years through the medium of that same universal and Catholic Church.*

*Please believe that, as soon as I could and after a painful infirmity which came upon me in Cléry<sup>11</sup> and which I still have, I told you what was rankling in my mind. I wanted to treat you as a friend and a Christian and leave no bitterness in my soul that could alter ever so little the friendship I wish to maintain with you to the end of my life. I have given you evidence of this, since that painful distress, by the letter I wrote to the Bishop of Poitiers, and I would have given you even greater proof, if I had felt death approaching, by drawing up for you some articles concerning the things in your Institute with which I find fault. In that way I might have brought you to understand, at least after my death, my motives for offering you my service. You thought so little of it that you took the simple proposal I made you in that regard as a proof of the four things of which you accused me. Provided God does not accuse me of them, I am quite content. May He accept as His own the charity with which I intended to rid you of certain practices that I have always tolerated in your discipline, seeing how attached you were to them. Your determination to preserve them was even stronger because it was authorized by the advice of important people whom you were consulting.<sup>12</sup> After that, I am not fool enough to mention the thought I had on the matter, that God, in my opinion, does not receive them favorably. For there is only one true simplicity in which they can be done, rarer than the common grace of Christians and so rare that I would daresay of it what one of the blessed of our time<sup>13</sup> has said of directors of souls today, that of ten thousand who make it their profession, people can barely single out one who can render them excusable before God. Nevertheless, I shall have the patience He Himself has in letting you act and I shall remain in the same willingness I have shown you to serve you in that regard through condescension, though I cannot do so with full approval. I shall leave aside the quality of master to take on that of a most humble and most obedient servant. . . .<sup>14</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup>A canton in Loiret.

<sup>12</sup>The only person intended here by Saint-Cyran is André Duval. (Examination, questions 117 and 118.)

<sup>13</sup>Saint Francis de Sales. (Examination, question 119.)

<sup>14</sup>Saint Vincent did not answer Saint-Cyran's letter but, as soon as he heard of his return to Paris, he went to thank him. (Examination, question 34; cf. also, Barcos, *Défense de feu M. Vincent de Paul*, p. 16.)

282. - TO MONSIEUR BELIN

November 21, 1637

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Germaine wrote to me about the difficulty she is having in going back to her usual confessor. I advised her to change. *Mon Dieu*, Monsieur, how I pity you! O well, Our Lord will reward you for all you suffer and put up with because of her.

I have detained for seven or eight days one of the two boys who brought her letter. I shall do what I can to find a master for him. If I cannot, I shall send him back. Please let me know what kind of boy he is, whether there is reason to hope that he will do well, and do so as soon as possible.

I am sorry about the two écus I owe you, but do I not owe you more? I did not dare give them to this messenger. I shall give them to the first person I find who can be trusted.

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your. . . .

283. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around November 1637]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You must patiently put up with your son's state of mind until Our Lord chooses to have him enter the way of life suited to the one he has in mind. Who will bear with a child if not his mother,

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**Letter 282.** - Reg. I, f<sup>o</sup> 64. The copyist notes that the original letter was in Saint Vincent's handwriting.

**Letter 283.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written a few days after no. 278.



and to whom does it belong to call each one to his duty but to God? Since he is not studying and cannot decide on anything, I do not see much objection to your thinking about M. de Riez.<sup>2</sup> It is not a means to improve him, but to keep him somewhat occupied and to reduce to some extent idleness, the mother of all vices, so that it will not get the better of him. But in what capacity will it be? That is what is holding me back. We must give that some consideration and recommend it to God and we shall discuss it. I shall send Madame Moran<sup>3</sup> word to give him that room over the main entrance. As for the rest of what you say, please do not think of it.

What you tell me about little Barbe's vow seems unnecessary. She is entering religion to assist the sick who she will be told are poor and consequently within the terms of her vow. But if she is beset by scruples, the Bishop can dispense her from it. Be assured that she will often have regrets and therefore will be a cause of worry to those good nuns. And if she were to come back, I do not know whether it would be advisable to accept her.

I have seen neither Henriette nor Marie.<sup>4</sup> You must pray for the Sisters and if you can get strong enough, go to the country.

I am a little worried about your patients. Please feed them well, cheer them up, and greet both of them for me.

The night before last, Madame Goussault had a serious sweating attack and has been feeling better since, so I have been told. Recover a little more of your strength and you will both be stronger when you see each other. I have told her about your indisposition at any rate. *Mon Dieu*, Mademoiselle, with what calmness and strength she has accepted the Will of God in her

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<sup>2</sup>Louis-Denis d'Attichy, son of Valence de Marillac and first cousin of Saint Louise, was born in 1593 at the Château d'Attichy. In 1614, he entered the Order of the Minims (community founded by Saint Francis of Paula), became provincial of Burgundy and was raised to the See of Riez in Provence (1628). He was then transferred to Autun (1652), where he died of gall stones, June 30, 1664. He left several works, among others a general history of the Order of the Minims and a life of Cardinal de Bérulle.

<sup>3</sup>Housekeeper at the Collège des Bons-Enfants.

<sup>4</sup>Henriette Gesseaume and Marie Bécu.

illness! Her disposition in health is nothing in comparison with her attitude in sickness. But who brings that about? Is it she? Is it not Our Lord? I am, in His love, your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

284. - TO MOTHER DE LA TRINITE, IN TROYES<sup>1</sup>

My most dear and Reverend Mother,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am most unworthy to thank you as we are doing for the favors you are constantly pleased to do for us. That is why, my most dear and amiable Mother, I am asking the Holy Virgin, to whom you have given me in a special way, to obtain from her Son, that both of them may be your reward and your thanks.

I have considered several priests for your perquisites,<sup>2</sup> but God has not allowed me to find what you need yet. I shall continue to be on the lookout, but I doubt that I shall do so as efficaciously as you watch over our frailty. Nevertheless, I shall do my best.

I shall also have statements drawn up for you about the vener-

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**Letter 284.** - The original autograph letter is at the Carmelite convent of Troyes in Saint-Germain, 10120 Saint-André-les-Vergers.

<sup>1</sup>Marie d'Hanivel, daughter of the Grand Audiencier [officer who proclaims the orders of a court], was born in Paris in 1579. As a girl she found only joy in a world that flattered her. Brought to do some serious thinking by the sudden death of a friend and by the words of the renowned Capuchin Father, Ange de Joyeuse, she refused to marry the nephew of the Duc de Villars. On the advice of her cousin M. de Brétigny and of Madame Acarie, she entered the Carmelites on the rue Saint-Jacques in Paris on November 1, 1604, in the early days of its foundation. She took the name of Marie de la Trinité and was professed in the convent in Dijon in 1605. In Dijon she was for some time the confidante of the Baronne de Chantal. Prioress successively in Pontoise, Rouen, Amiens, and Caen, she founded the Carmels in Troyes (1620), Châtillon (1621), and a second convent in Troyes (1630), where she died March 6, 1647, at the age of sixty-eight. (Cf. Placide Gallemant, *op. cit.*, pp. 329-339.)

<sup>2</sup>That is, perquisites to be enjoyed by a priest, from special Masses, etc.

ated Monsieur Gallemant<sup>3</sup> by one of his vicars<sup>4</sup> whom we have here in the house and by a priest whom he made use of when he was a little boy during the catechism lessons he used to give wherever he went. I shall also add what I personally know about him. I have not been able to do it since my return because of pressing business.

I am, my most dear and most amiable Mother, your most humble and most grateful servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, November 28, 1637

*Addressed:* Reverend Mother de la Trinité, Superioress of the second monastery of the Carmelites of Troyes, in Troyes

## 285. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[End of 1637]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I praise God that you are feeling better. Please eat some eggs, for otherwise it is to be feared that you may have a relapse. As for that poor young woman in Madrid,<sup>2</sup> I shall have a serious talk with

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<sup>3</sup>Jacques Gallemant, Doctor of the Sorbonne, first Superior of the Carmelites in France, Pastor in Aumale, then in Aubervilliers near Paris. He died in Besançon on December 25, 1630, at the age of seventy-two. Father Placide Gallemant published his life in 1653. It was probably for him that Mother de la Trinité was seeking biographical information.

<sup>4</sup>The person in question was Jean Pillé, formerly a curate in Aubervilliers. He entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1631.

**Letter 285.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter seems to precede by a few days the institution of the Foundlings.

<sup>2</sup>An old section in the suburbs of Paris, long remembered by the Château de Madrid, which had been built in the area on the edge of the Bois de Boulogne by François I<sup>er</sup>. The ruins of the château were razed in the 1960's and replaced by an apartment building.

the Attorney General<sup>3</sup> about the matter and about a means of assisting those poor creatures at the Foundlings.<sup>4</sup> Madame Goussault may perhaps have been able to tell you about the overture made to me in that regard. We shall discuss it with you in three or four days if your health allows you to come here.

I do not know what to tell you with regard to the Sisters from Saint-Paul,<sup>5</sup> except that you must not expect anything other than trouble and difficulty. We shall talk about it when you come. Do not think, however, that my heart will change in any way with regard to the service you desire of me. Only death could prevent me from being, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, Thursday morning

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

286. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[December 1637]<sup>1</sup>

You will see from the enclosed, Mademoiselle, how much the Pastor in Rueil<sup>2</sup> prefers the Sister from Nanterre<sup>3</sup> to Barbe.<sup>4</sup> I adore Providence in this. We must put her to work farther away

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<sup>3</sup>Mathieu Molé.

<sup>4</sup>The foundlings taken in at the Couche, rue Saint-Landry.

<sup>5</sup>A parish in Paris.

**Letter 286.** - According to Coste, the original autograph letter was at the house of the Daughters of Charity in Castelsarrasin. This house is now closed and the present location of the letter is unknown.

<sup>1</sup>After January 1, 1638, Saint Vincent would not have said Madame de Combalet, but rather the Duchesse d'Aiguillon. On the other hand, the date of December 1637 is required because of the presence of Lambert aux Couteaux in Richelieu. (Cf. no. 287.)

<sup>2</sup>In Hauts-de-Seine. Richelieu had his country house near there.

<sup>3</sup>Near Paris.

<sup>4</sup>Barbe Angiboust.

and in a more useful manner. M. Lambert, who is in Richelieu,<sup>5</sup> told Madame de Combalet that a Charity must be established there; two poor women had died there that week without assistance. What do you think, Mademoiselle, of sending Barbe and some other young woman?<sup>6</sup> Oh! how much good there is to be done in that region! If you are a gallant woman, you could go there in the spring, by coach as far as Orléans and then by water as far as Saumur, which is eight leagues farther. Well, all for the best. We shall talk about it.

In the meantime, I send you greetings and am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

287. - TO BERNARD CODOING, IN ROMANS<sup>1</sup>

December 27, 1637

For a long time now, I have been hesitant about whether I should ask you to come and work in Richelieu. The Cardinal is

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<sup>5</sup>In Indre-et-Loire.

<sup>6</sup>This plan was not to become a reality until the final months of 1638.

**Letter 287.** - Reg. 2, p. 277.

<sup>1</sup>Bernard Codoing was born in Agen on August 11, 1610. He was ordained a priest in December 1635 and was received into the Congregation of the Mission on February 10, 1636. He holds an important place among the first companions of Saint Vincent. He was the first Superior of the seminary in Annecy (1640-1642) and directed the house in Rome for two years (1642-1644). Then he was placed at the head of the Saint Charles Seminary, situated on the grounds of Saint-Lazare (1645-1646). From there he went to Saint-Méen under particularly difficult circumstances (1646-1648), next to La Rose (1648-1649), and finally to Richelieu (1649-1650), always as Superior. He was very successful in his missions in France and Italy. His sermons were so appealing that at one point Saint Vincent considered publishing them. Bernard Codoing would have rendered greater service to Saint Vincent had he been less attached to his own ideas and had he learned to control his tendency to hastiness. We might be tempted to say "Happy faults!", since they merited for us some of the most beautiful letters in Saint Vincent's correspondence.

founding a Mission there, both for that duchy<sup>2</sup> and for the See of Luçon, together with the work for the ordinands and the retreatants of the Poitiers diocese.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, I considered the needs of the good people where you are and the good use they are making of the grace Our Lord is offering them. But, on the other hand, I felt that the same need and the same good is found among the people of Poitou. People have written to me, and M. Renar, who has just returned from there, told me that they have never seen souls so touched or such crowds coming from every direction.

What has caused me to decide in favor of Richelieu is the obligation we have there, since the foundation is perpetual. That is why, Monsieur, I most humbly entreat you to leave upon receipt of

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Some time between 1651 and 1655 Codoing left the Congregation of the Mission. On July 24, 1654, he was Pastor of Saint-Hilaire in Agen, where he last signed the baptismal register on January 2, 1673. He also acted as Vicar General of the Bishop of Gap. The last reference to Codoing is October 6, 1675, at which time he was at the Seminary in Sens (cf. *Annales* [1949-1950]).

<sup>2</sup>The duchy-peerage of Richelieu had been constituted in 1631 along with the baronies of Faye-la-Vineuse, Isle-Bouchard, and Chinon.

<sup>3</sup>The foundation contract between Cardinal Richelieu and Saint Vincent was signed January 4, 1638, at the Château de Rueil (cf. Arch. Nat. MM 534). The Saint agreed to send seven priests to Richelieu before the month of March and to add three others within two years to take over the pastoral functions in that locality. These priests were to give missions within the duchy and the Sees of Luçon and Poitiers, prepare the ordinands, and receive priests for retreats. The contract further stipulated that, "of these ten, four shall remain in the town of Richelieu to perform the functions of the above-mentioned mission, three shall be sent every five years into every town and village of the duchy of Richelieu to perform the functions of the mission and, after having covered the entire duchy and while waiting for the cycle to begin over, they shall give the mission in the See of Poitiers or other places near the duchy, at his Eminence's pleasure. The other three shall be sent to the See of Luçon for the same purpose. The six sent to the duchy and to the See of Luçon shall be obliged to go to those places four times a year in the most suitable seasons, and to spend six weeks there each time. . . ."

The contract also mandated that "the above-mentioned Vincent binds himself . . . in perpetuity to receive in the house of the Mission in Richelieu all those in the Poitiers diocese who wish to be ordained and to instruct, lodge, and feed them for the twelve days preceding the Ember Days. He is also to receive throughout the year, in perpetuity, all the priests whom the Bishop of Poitiers and his successors wish to send for retreat and instructions in ecclesiastical functions. He shall house and feed them for two weeks, provided, however, that not more than eight priests be sent at one time, in addition to those who are to be promoted to sacred orders."

For his part, the Cardinal gave the Saint the revenue from the record office of Loudun, valued at 4550 livres, and committed himself to procuring the necessary lodging.

this letter, if you are not on a mission. If you are, let it be immediately after you have finished, without letting it be known until your departure. We must not fail in our obligation to be in the aforesaid Richelieu by January 20 or 25. You can assure the people there that when God is pleased to send us some men to serve them in our vocation, we shall share them, but, in the meantime, absolute necessity obliges us to act in this way.

I had asked M. Grenu to go and work in Aiguillon, which is in the vicinity of Agen, but since then I have asked him to come to Troyes for a special reason. M. de Sergis informed me that all of Aiguillon has gone to confession and that the important people were the first to begin. Only a very few people were left and they were to go the following day. M. Hopille, the Vicar General, sent him four or five pastors from the diocese. They worked with him in Aiguillon for three weeks, except on Sundays when they went to their own parishes. He also told me that crowds of people came in from the countryside to make their devotions, even from as far away as ten leagues. Judge, Monsieur, whether the prickly thorns of our human nature do not produce fine roses; they blossom as soon as the sun of justice sheds the rays of its grace upon them. Even so, I had to say this word to you for your consolation.

Let us get back to your journey. If you are ready to leave with M. Grenu, you could travel together as far as Lyons. From there he will head for Châlons and you for Roanne, where you can take a boat as far as Orléans. From there, you can go to Saumur, where you will be one day from Richelieu. You will find Messieurs Lambert and Perdu in Champigny, about one league from Richelieu.

O Monsieur, how many spiritual needs there are in that locality, where there are so many heretics<sup>4</sup> for want of having heard God

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<sup>4</sup>Huguenots, who had espoused the doctrines of Calvinism. They had been granted religious and political freedom by the Edict of Nantes (April 15, 1598). Cardinal Richelieu, fearing the political freedom which made the Huguenots almost a state within the State, successfully waged war against the centers of the Huguenots and their citadel of La Rochelle. The Edict of

spoken of, so they say, in the Catholics' church! It was in that area that the heresy was first spread, diffused, and most obstinately defended. It was from there that it drew its main strength for the overthrow of our holy religion and even of the State, if it had been able to do so. Oh! what a great empire Satan had and still has there! I hope, Monsieur, that Our Lord will make use of you and of good M. Durot<sup>5</sup> to give him a fair fight, certainly not *in sublimitate sermonis et humanae sapientiae verbis, sed in ostensione virtutis spiritus, in humilitate et mansuetudine, in patientia et longanimitate*.<sup>6</sup>

Go, therefore, Monsieur, *in nomine Domini*. I entreat His Divine Goodness to grant you His holy blessing together with a greater share in His spirit. I have no doubt that your heart feels as though it is being torn from that locality where you have put down roots of charity in those souls, and that you are experiencing the emotions of Saint Paul when he said his final farewell to that people who wept so much over him. Oh well, it depends only upon a truly apostolic heart to strengthen itself against such feelings, to rise above them, and to go where holy obedience reveals Our Lord calling. Certainly, Monsieur, to be in that state is to

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Grace of Alès (June 27, 1629) abolished the political privileges of the Huguenots while leaving untouched the religious guarantees of the Edict of Nantes.

<sup>5</sup>Nicolas Durot, born in Oisemont (Somme), was received into the Congregation of the Mission in August 1633 and ordained a priest in December 1636. In 1639 he was preaching around Toulouse and in August 1640 we find him in Paris. He returned to Richelieu in 1642, left the Congregation in 1645 and, thanks to Saint Vincent, was made Canon of Saint-Martin in Angers.

<sup>6</sup>... *in the loftiness of sermons and in words of human wisdom, but in the demonstration of spiritual virtue, in humility and gentleness, in patience and forbearance.*

As he often did, Saint Vincent paraphrased the Sacred Scriptures. This text is composed of divers passages from Saint Paul:

1 Cor. 2:1 and 4. "As for myself, brothers, when I came to you I did not come proclaiming God's testimony with any particular eloquence or 'wisdom'." "My message and my preaching had none of the persuasive force of 'wise' argumentation, but the convincing power of the Spirit."

Eph. 4:2. "... with perfect humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another lovingly."

Col. 1:11. "By the might of his glory you will be endowed with the strength needed to stand fast, even to endure joyfully whatever may come." (NAB)



accomplish God's good pleasure and to begin one's paradise here in this world. But what am I saying to a soul who has always appeared quite ready to go to the ends of the earth for the love of God if holy obedience should require it?

I do not know why my pen has run away from me to say all this to you. I do know that it is not because I think you need to be persuaded, since perhaps you need rather to be restrained in the ardor of your zeal. That is something I have to talk to you about and shall discuss with you some day, please God. He knows, He alone, why I have rambled on without thinking.

It would be wise for you take your leave of the Bishop of Valence<sup>7</sup> by a visit or in writing and to thank him for the favor of having accepted your service in his diocese. Tell him that nothing less than sheer necessity could have induced us to recall you and, if God be pleased to give us the means, we shall try to return on another occasion.

Please take leave also of good and very dear Sister Marie<sup>8</sup> and recommend to her prayers this Little Company and the most frail and miserable of all men, myself, I who am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble. . . .

I shall expect no other response than that of your departure. Please let it be as soon as possible. Your brother is awaiting letters from you in response to the ones I sent you from him. I guess Our Lord has cured you of too fond a love for your relatives.

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<sup>7</sup>Charles-Jacques de Gélais de Leberon (1624-1654).

<sup>8</sup>Marie Tessonnière or Marie de Valence was a holy widow with a very special devotion to the Blessed Trinity. Saint Francis de Sales called her a living relic. Jean-Jacques Olier made the trip from Paris to Valence to consult her. Cardinal de Bérulle, Saint Vincent, and Father Coton, her director, had the deepest respect for her. After her death, she was given a sort of public veneration. Her life, published in Lyons in 1650 (cf. Loys de la Rivière, *Histoire de la vie et moeurs de Marie Tessonnière* [Lyons: n. p., 1650]) on the express order of the Queen Regent, Anne of Austria, and with the approval of several doctors of the Sorbonne, displeased the Bishop of Valence, who censured the book and had it condemned by the Assembly of the Clergy of France. The Prelate and the Assembly likewise forbade devotion to her.

288. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

Together we must see about what has to be done with regard to Saint-Leu.<sup>1</sup> At the last meeting,<sup>2</sup> it was the general opinion that you be asked to experiment with the foundlings to see if there is a way of feeding them with cow's milk, and to get<sup>3</sup> two or three of them for that purpose. I am consoled that Providence is turning to you for this work. I am well aware that there are a number of things with which to find fault. We shall discuss them.<sup>4</sup>

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**Letter 288.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>A parish in Paris

<sup>2</sup>The meeting of the Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu.

<sup>3</sup>The original text reads: "cow's milk, and for that purpose to get. . . ." Saint Vincent obviously forgot to erase "and for that purpose."

<sup>4</sup>At that time a great number of children were being abandoned in Paris and its suburbs. Saint Vincent estimated that there were about three or four hundred of them. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. 10, 1st ed., p. 362.) Any passerby who came upon one was supposed to notify the chief of police in the neighborhood. He alone had the right to pick up the child. The foundlings were taken to the Hôtel-Dieu and from there to the Couche on the rue Saint-Landry, where a widow assisted by two servants was responsible for their care. The house lacked funds and the wet nurses, devotedness. Death claimed so many victims among the little creatures that Saint Vincent could say in one of his talks to the Ladies of Charity: "For the past fifty years, not one of them has lived, unless someone has been found lately who survived." The servants used to give them drugs to make them sleep, or sell them for eight sous to beggars who broke their arms and legs to arouse the pity of passersby! Saint Vincent, who was involved in so many charitable works, was familiar with the Couche. He deplored such abuses and was trying to find a solution to the situation. The company of the Ladies of Charity was taking care of the sick at the Hôtel-Dieu. The Paris chapter urged them to assume responsibility for the foundlings as well. After two years of prayer and reflection, Saint Vincent decided to try it. The letter quoted above shows us that the beginnings of the work were very modest: two or three children confided to the care of a few Daughters of Charity and nourished with cow's milk. This number soon rose to twelve, and four wet nurses were given to them. They were housed on the rue des Boulangers near the Porte Saint-Victor. This modest effort brought good results. Consequently, in 1640 the Ladies decided to accept all the foundlings who were brought. The King and Queen became interested in the undertaking and in 1642 Louis XIII gave four thousand livres out of his Gonesse estate; in 1644, the gift was doubled. Then the Ladies acquired the Château de Bicêtre where the weaned babies were taken in 1647. Finally, in 1651 the stay at Bicêtre was recognized as harmful to the children's health. They returned to Paris and were housed at the far end of the faubourg Saint-Denis, and in 1670 in two houses, one opposite Notre-Dame and the other in the faubourg Saint-Antoine. (Cf. Pierre Coste, *Saint Vincent de Paul et les dames de la Charité* [Paris: Bloud, 1917], pp. 17-34.)

For the history of the Foundlings, one can refer still further to the following: the rules set up

Madame Goussault, the President's wife, does not seem at all strong to me. Take care of your health.

I wish you a young heart and a love in its first bloom for Him Who loves us unceasingly and as tenderly as if He were just beginning to love us. For all God's pleasures are ever new and full of variety, although He never changes.

I am, in His love, with an affection such as His Goodness desires and which I owe Him out of love for Him, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

New Year's Day [1638]<sup>5</sup>

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

### 289. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[January 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am returning your report and mine. Please insert into mine the words you are adding or changing, and please take the trouble to copy it at your convenience and send the whole thing back to me. I mean even the report you wrote which I am returning.<sup>2</sup>

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by Saint Louise for the Sisters in charge of them (cf. *Ecrits spirituels*, A. 80); her memoirs on the same subject (ibid., A. 91); François-Timoléon, Abbé de Choisy, *La Vie de Madame de Miramion* (Paris: A. Dezallier, 1706), pp. 140 ff.; Alexandre Monnier, *Histoire de l'Assistance publique dans les temps anciens et modernes* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1856), pp. 396 ff.; Léon Lallemand, *Un chapitre de l'Histoire des Enfants trouvés. La maison de la Couche à Paris* (Paris: Champion, 1885).

<sup>5</sup>The year the work of the Foundlings began. (Cf. Coste, *op. cit.*, p. 21, n. 1.)

**Letter 289.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter seems to have been written a few days before no. 297.

<sup>2</sup>We believe this is referring to reports pertaining to the new establishment of the Foundlings.

I sent word asking M. de Cordes to come here to the house today and registered my report about M. de Marillac.<sup>3</sup>

I find no objection at all to your visiting Madame de Liancourt at your leisure.

Please see about those two young women. The smaller one seems to be just as you described her; if the other one is really called, her own town of Nogent might have need of her in time.<sup>4</sup>

The parents of the girl who died at the Hôtel-Dieu will want her clothes and rightly so. For anything further, until the matter is settled, we shall look into it. Meanwhile, it is better to leave them where they are. The law must be made before it is put into practice.

I shall most willingly warn you of your faults and shall not let a single one of them go by.

I do not quite understand what you told me about the officers and yourself. What reason do you have for saying that you are not to be mentioned in the matter? You must beware of falling into the vice of singularity because it is rooted in vanity, and vanity, in pride, the vice of all vices. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

Today I am going to La Chapelle to hear Mademoiselle d'Atri's<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Michel de Marillac, grandson of the Keeper of the Seals, Seigneur d'Ollainville, Counselor in the Paris Parlement. He died December 29, 1684.

<sup>4</sup>She proved unsatisfactory. Saint Vincent would later exclaim: "*O mon Dieu!* how that poor creature deceived me!"

<sup>5</sup>Marie-Angélique d'Atri, born in 1617, was brought up at Port-Royal where she met Saint-Cyran and revealed her conscience to him several times. In her youth she underwent a terrible crisis about which we shall say more later. Her aversion for the things of God was so great that she was thought to be possessed by the devil and the ecclesiastical judge of Paris commissioned Saint Vincent to exorcise her. Shortly after her cure, she was placed in a Dominican convent from which she soon went to the Benedictines of the newly founded monastery in Picpus-les-Paris. She was already there on June 19, 1638, and was still there in 1639 trying to discern her vocation. On June 19, 1638, she appeared before the tribunal responsible for investigating Saint-Cyran. In her deposition, published by the Jesuit François Pinthereau (*op. cit.*, p. 421), she declared that her melancholy, allied to certain illnesses, inclined her to

confession. I shall not be able to see M. de Cordes until Friday according to what he has just written me.

Enclosed is the Comtesse de Maure's<sup>6</sup> letter.

290. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[January 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have been thinking of coming to see you lately, especially today, but I find myself absolutely prevented from doing so. I shall come as soon as possible. However, let me tell you that I am worried about your fevers at night. Please take care of your health as much as you can for the sake of Our Lord and His work. Still, I think you have been less sick this winter than during others, especially while you were living in the city, and that consoles me somewhat.

Let us talk about three things. About the little foundlings — I am being pressured in an unimaginable way by M. Hardy.<sup>2</sup> He is blaming me for all the delay. Mademoiselle du Mée is in the

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scrupulosity. The attraction she felt for religious life, towards which Saint-Cyran was directing her, was hindered by her repugnance to making commitments. In 1639 or shortly after, she returned to Port-Royal and had a small hermitage built near the church where she lived until the dispersion in 1669. She ended her days near Forcalquier where she had sought seclusion. An ardent Jansenist, she consecrated part of her immense fortune to the works of that sect. Her mind was somewhat unbalanced and her will indecisive. Saint-Cyran wrote her several letters from Vincennes.

<sup>6</sup>Anne Doni d'Attichy, Comtesse de Maure, Saint Louise's cousin.

**Letter 290.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written before no. 295, during the mission in Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

<sup>2</sup>Sébastien Hardy, Sieur de la Tabaize, former Councillor of the King and former District Collector of excise and election taxes in Le Mans. On January 27, 1640, he left an income of fifty livres tournois [local measure of money based on the amount of silver or gold in a coin] to the work of the Foundlings. (Arch. Nat., Y180, f<sup>o</sup> 208 v<sup>o</sup>.)

country. Would there be any objection to your buying a goat and continuing your experiment further?

The second matter is that we are being asked for a Sister from the Charity for Saint-Germain-en-Laye. The mission is being given there and the Charity has been set up since last Sunday.<sup>3</sup> She is to get those good women started. What do you think of sending Barbe?<sup>4</sup> They have a special reason for wanting her there — because of the soldiers the King wants helped. We shall need a room for that purpose while the court is there. Oh! how I wish you could go! But then, Our Lord is receiving more glory from you as you are. Let us get back to Barbe. Will you be able to give her a companion, or will you send her alone? The first would be better. In that case, will you have someone else for Saint-Jacques?<sup>5</sup>

I do not know what to tell you about the Sister at Saint-Paul,<sup>6</sup> except that I am afraid you may cause some grumbling. Marguerite's mind wanders sometimes. I wrote to M. de la Salle to let me know if that young woman would be good at teaching school. In any case, it is only for a while; she will be needed for Richelieu.

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<sup>3</sup>On Richelieu's advice, the King had chosen Nicolas Pavillon, who had just been named to the bishopric of Alet, to give the mission. The outcome was worthy of note. Louis XIII went to hear the preacher several times. Ladies of the court, maids of honor of the Queen, devoted until then to society gatherings, no longer appeared among the courtiers. A Confraternity of Charity was established, of which they became members. They were to be seen, modestly dressed, taking their turn visiting the poor and the sick. The nobles of the court, annoyed, gave the King to understand that the visiting of the sick by people who came so close to the Queen was a danger to the royal family. The King became alarmed, but the Queen came to the defense of her ladies and maids of honor. Then the nobles tried to discredit Pavillon. They told Louis XIII that the preacher had compared him to the beast of the Apocalypse. For their part, the musketeers, at the instigation of the courtiers, complained that Pavillon had advised them to be satisfied with their salary, without requiring anything else from their hosts. Pavillon had to defend himself, which he did in a long written statement. Since this statement did not suffice, he asked the King to accept the verdict of the Sorbonne, which decided in his favor. (Cf. Etienne Dejean, *op. cit.*, p. 15, n. 2.)

<sup>4</sup>Barbe Angiboust.

<sup>5</sup>Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie, a parish in Paris. The Charity was not established at Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas until later.

<sup>6</sup>A parish in Paris.

The third matter pertains to Marie from Saint-Laurent.<sup>7</sup> Her father has earnestly entreated me to take her back. Do you think that would be a good idea? If so, send her word to speak to me.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

My greetings to Madame Pelletier. The Chancellor's wife<sup>8</sup> is working for her. Madame de Chaumont<sup>9</sup> is the superior in Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

290a. - TO JEAN DE FONTENEIL, IN BORDEAUX

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I think I answered your last letter and rejoiced with you at the care of His Goodness for you and those good missionaries of your company. I greet them with all possible affection and reverence. I thank you most humbly, Monsieur, for your kindness in having written to our Aiguillon<sup>1</sup> Missionaries. I am informing them that it is not yet time for them to go and see you. They will do so a few months from now. Meanwhile, Monsieur, I beg you to forward the enclosed to M. de Saint-Martin in Dax.

Good Monsieur Nevelet, the Archdeacon of Troyes, died of the plague some time ago. That has somewhat scattered their company, but I hope it will serve to unite them more closely. I made a trip to Troyes during that time, and God knows how many times

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<sup>7</sup>The parish in which Saint-Lazare was located.

<sup>8</sup>Madame Séguier.

<sup>9</sup>Marie de Bailleul, lady-in-waiting to Anne of Austria, wife of Louis de Chaumont, Seigneur d'Athieules, and sister of Nicolas de Bailleul.

**Letter 290a.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Principal town of a canton in Lot-et-Garonne.

good Monsieur Roté, that holy man, did me the honor of thinking it appropriate for us to speak of you.

The priests' assembly<sup>2</sup> in this city keeps on getting better and better, it seems to me. Three bishops have just been drawn from among them: M. Godeau for Grasse,<sup>3</sup> M. Fouquet for Bayonne,<sup>4</sup> M. Pavillon for Alet;<sup>5</sup> and M. Barreau has just been named by

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<sup>2</sup>The Tuesday conferences.

<sup>3</sup>Antoine Godeau, born in Dreux on September 24, 1605, was a frequent visitor at the Hôtel de Rambouillet, where he had been nicknamed "Julie's Dwarf." His poetry was relished there. It earned for him Richelieu's favor and a seat in the French Academy. He was consecrated Bishop of Grasse, December 24, 1636. A stroke carried him off on April 17, 1672. He wrote a great deal both in poetry and in prose concerning history, Sacred Scripture, discipline, and various subjects of devotion. His poetic works fill three volumes. (Cf. Georges Doublet, *Godeau, évêque de Grasse et de Vence* [1605-1672] [Paris: A. Picard, 1911].)

<sup>4</sup>François Fouquet was the son of François Fouquet, Comte de Vaux, and of the devout Marie de Maupeou, who was, among the Ladies of Charity, one of the most admirable for her zeal and her devotedness to Saint Vincent. Fouquet's brothers were Nicolas Fouquet, Superintendent of Finances, and Louis Fouquet, Bishop of Agde. His sister, Louise-Agnès, became a nun in the first monastery of the Visitation. François Fouquet, appointed to the bishopric of Bayonne in 1636, was not consecrated until March 15, 1639. He was transferred to the See of Agde in 1643, appointed Coadjutor of Narbonne, December 18, 1656, and Archbishop of that diocese in 1659. Relegated to Alençon in 1661, he died in his exile on October 19, 1673. He summoned the Priests of the Mission to Agde and Narbonne and established the Daughters of Charity in the latter town. A very zealous prelate, too zealous perhaps, he found Saint Vincent's slowness hard to understand, but he, more than anyone else, admired his virtue. He felt deeply the death of this great servant of God. As soon as he received news of it, he wrote to the priests of Saint-Lazare: "However prepared I may have been for M. Vincent's death, since he was advanced in age, I assure you that I did not hear the news of his passing without surprise and without being moved with a great sorrow, humanly speaking, at seeing the Church deprived of a most worthy subject, the Congregation of its very dear Father, and I myself of a very charitable friend to whom I am so greatly obligated. I think that of all those whom his charity caused him to embrace as his children, there is no one to whom he showed more affection and gave more signs of friendship than to me."

<sup>5</sup>Pavillon was deeply grieved at the news of his appointment and fell ill. Consumed by fever, he visibly declined. He considered throwing himself at Richelieu's feet, but his best friends discouraged him from this. He went into seclusion, not wishing to see anyone anymore, not even Saint Vincent. However, the good Saint finally persuaded him to accept his appointment. He went so far as to tell Pavillon that "on the day of judgment he would rise up against him along with the souls of the Alet diocese destined to die to God" if he abandoned them by his refusal. Pavillon made his preparatory retreat at Saint-Lazare under Saint Vincent's direction. One of his friends related: "One morning, I was astonished to see M. Vincent and several Priests of the Mission enter his room and kneel down in a circle. He turned to Monsieur Vincent and, in front of all those men, he confessed the faults he realized he had committed in conversation. He asked their pardon for the scandal he had given them, in such humble terms that I was overwhelmed. In the name of those assembled, Monsieur Vincent responded in



the King as Coadjutor of Sarlat, without the Bishop's<sup>6</sup> consent.

God has called good M. Semusse<sup>7</sup> to Himself. He lived as a saint and died in the same way. And I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, January 8, 1638<sup>8</sup>

*Addressed:* Monsieur de Fonteneil, Canon of Saint-Seurin, in Bordeaux

291. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[January 17, 1638]<sup>1</sup>

*Monsieur,*

*Our procurator from the Charity and the sisters are doing wonders today for the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus. Of their own accord, they wanted me to send and ask you to arrange a sermon for them for Vespers, which are not said before two-thirty. They would really like Monsieur de la Salle, but if that is not possible, they would gladly have someone else. I join with them in asking this favor so that they may be encouraged to perseverance.*

*I think you know that Sister Barbe<sup>2</sup> is here and that both she and I are in good health right now. I think it would be very good for her to have the*

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almost the same words." M. Pavillon was consecrated in the Church of Saint-Lazare on August 22, 1639, by the Archbishop of Paris. (Cf. *Suite des mémoires pour servir à la vie de Messire Nicolas Pavillon, évêque d'Alet*, 1733, p. 213; E. Dejean, *op. cit.*, p. 15.)

<sup>6</sup>Louis de Salignac de Lamothe-Fénelon.

<sup>7</sup>A tear in the paper makes the reading of the third letter of the word uncertain.

<sup>8</sup>In his corrections in vol. VIII, Coste gave this year. The placement of the letter has been altered accordingly.

**Letter 291.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter, written on the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, belongs between nos. 290 and 295.

<sup>2</sup>Barbe Angiboust.

*honor of seeing you before she leaves. Should we not be thinking about the little furnishings she will need?*

*Please do not worry about the wet nurse for the infants; we do not have any of them yet. The nurse we have will be quite adequate for the time you indicate and longer.*

*I am, in the love of Jesus, Monsieur, your most humble daughter and most grateful servant.*

L. DE M.

Addressed: *Monsieur Vincent*

292. - TO MOTHER DE LA TRINITE, IN TROYES

My very dear Mother,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

This is Monsieur du Coudray, one of our Missionaries, who is coming to see you with the draft of the contract for the foundation of the Bishop of Troyes.<sup>1</sup> The Commander thought it advisable to

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**Letter 292.** - The original autograph letter is at the Carmelite monastery of Troyes in Saint-Germain, 10120 Saint-André-les-Vergers.

<sup>1</sup>As early as 1621, René de Breslay, Bishop of Troyes, with the assistance of Adrien Bourdoise and at the insistence of Mother de la Trinité had made an attempt to found a mission house in his episcopal city. In 1637, the Prelate and the Prioress of the Carmelite monastery felt urged interiorly to resume the abandoned project. They mentioned it to M. de Sillery, titular of the Commandery in Troyes, and it was decided that Missionaries would be requested of Saint Vincent. The agreement was concluded October 3, 1637, in the parlor of the Carmel, at a meeting of the Bishop of Troyes, Saint Vincent, and Mother de la Trinité. The new establishment was to open February 17, 1638, at the latest, and was to be staffed from the beginning by six priests and two brothers. Until 1641, the number of the priests could be four, if it was impossible to send more. The Missionaries were to evangelize the places in the diocese to which the Bishop of Troyes would see fit to send them and, every five years, the estates of the Commandery. The Prelate assured them an annual income of 2,000 livres and the Commander, half that amount. This contract was awaiting completion. On January 19, M. de Sillery gave the Priests of the Mission several funds and pieces of property, reserving the usufruct for his own use. Moreover, he promised to give them annually the sum of 100 livres tournois. Bishop de Breslay fulfilled his obligations on March 12 when he presented the Missionaries with a house worth 1,200 livres in revenue, situated in Paris on the important rue du faubourg Saint-Michel, and a sum of 600 livres, of which at first he gave only the interest. It was stipulated in this new contract that the Missionaries would prepare the ordinands for ten days, and would

act in this way. This is the work of your hands. It has pleased His Divine Majesty to grant you grace for it. I hope, dear Mother, that you will obtain some for us so that we may serve Him according to His plan. O dear Mother, how many beautiful precious stones you are adding to the crown Our Lord is continually fashioning for you! Their number will certainly be as great as the number of souls who will be saved by this means. But so that the sins and wretchedness of this poor, worthless Company, and especially my own, may not hinder Our Lord's work, I entreat you, dear Mother, to ask Him either to take us out of this world or to make us such that we may render Him the services His Divine Goodness expects of us. I am not going to thank you for all this. God alone is worthy of doing so and of being Himself your thanks. I say the same thing to your holy community which has prayed so fervently and done so much penance for this project. I offer to you and to it my everlasting gratitude for the favor you have done us, dear Mother, as well as my eternal submission to your wishes, which are those of Our Lord Himself.

In His love and in that of His holy Mother, I am, my very dear Mother, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, January 22, 1638

Monsieur du Coudray has instructions to do whatever you, dear Mother, shall order him to do. Give your orders, therefore, dear Mother, and you shall be obeyed.

*Addressed:* Reverend Mother de la Trinité, Superioress of the second monastery of the Carmelites of Troyes

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take the pastors into their house for retreats one at a time, outside the period consecrated to the ordinands. At the time the above letter was written, the March 12 contract was still only in the planning stage: it is the one Saint Vincent had in view here. (Cf. Arch. Nat. MM 534; A. Prévost, *Saint Vincent de Paul et ses oeuvres dans le diocèse de Troyes*, Troyes, 1896.)

293. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, IN RICHELIEU

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter of the twenty-fourth of this month. It greatly consoled me because you are so well, thank God, and because M. Perdu has recovered from his three attacks of fever.

I was quite pleased to be enlightened about the Toul affair.<sup>1</sup> I have sent M. du Coudray there with authority to settle the dispute. M. Midot<sup>2</sup> is taking good care of our interests. He wants M. Colée to give a report to the chapter. If it is found that there is no abuse on our part, he hopes to have the chapter join us and to come to this town himself for the interests of their diocese. President Faberolle, who is kindly disposed towards us, has toned down a

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**Letter 293.** - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>To understand the "Toul affair," we must go back to the origin of the establishment founded in that city. In 1238, Néméric Barat, Master Alderman of Toul, had entrusted a hospital which he had just built for orphans and the infirm to the Order of the Holy Spirit, but in 1635, the only members of that order who were still in the city were Master Dominique Thouvignon and two monks; Dominique Thouvignon resigned his benefice in favor of Bishop Charles de Gournay, in exchange for a pension of two thousand livres barrois [local measure of money based on the amount of silver or gold in a coin]. The latter offered it to the Priests of the Mission and Jean Dehorgny became titular by a royal decree in May 1635. Lambert aux Couteaux and Colée were placed there and carried out the functions of their state: missions, conferences to ecclesiastics, and retreats. On June 16, by amicable arrangement, the two Holy Spirit Brothers surrendered to Jean Dehorgny all their rights to the house and the hospital in exchange for a pension of six hundred livres barrois and certain privileges. The hospital absorbed a great deal of the Missionaries' time which they would have liked to devote to the missions. At their request, it was decreed on March 17, 1637, that the Bishop, the King's Lieutenant, and the Master Alderman would administer the hospice by means of two delegates of their choice, and the Mission would receive a third of the movable and immovable goods administered by the Holy Spirit Brothers before 1635. The division was a source of numerous disputes for four or five years. (Cf. Eugène Martin, *Histoire des diocèses de Toul, de Nancy et de Saint-Dié* [3 vols., Nancy: A. Crépin-Leblond, 1900-1903], vol. II, pp. 208 ff.) In December 1657, the King suppressed the Commandery of the Holy Spirit in Toul and united it to the Congregation of the Mission.

<sup>2</sup>Jean Midot, Doctor in Theology, Counselor in the Parlement of Metz, Grand Archdeacon, Canon, and Vicar General of Toul, was highly thought of in the courts of Rome and Lorraine. After the death of Charles de Gournay, he governed the diocese as Capitular Vicar. According to Collet (*op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 291, note), in the seventeenth century his family possessed several letters that Saint Vincent had written to him. Only one is known to us. Jean Midot was the author of *Mémoires sur les évêques de Toul*, which has remained in manuscript form.

little the intensity of the lawsuit. Had he not been obliged to leave, he might have been able to remedy the matter. I would gladly have done with it were we not obliged to prove that we are being wrongly accused of having misused those assets. Such is the thinking of M. de Cordes and M. de Sainte-Marthe. We have requested the removal,<sup>3</sup> according to the wishes of the said Sieur Midot. I was told a little while ago that the Chancellor<sup>4</sup> refused to place the seal on the letters. *Benedictus Deus!*

I was very pleased to receive the description of that small priory. M. des Roches<sup>5</sup> told me that he wanted to give it to us, but that has not yet been done. Please be so kind as to let me know whether you were told this from another source. Blessed be God for what you say about its being able to pay the expenses for the bread and wine of the house!

I would also like to know if the Loudun coaches are up to five thousand livres; they are sold for only forty-five hundred livres by the foundation. Perhaps their price has stabilized since then.

I shall see that something is done about the building,<sup>6</sup> but I would really like to know whether the fault is with the materials or the workmanship, or whether you want the height increased. A word about that, please.

That huge parish frightens me.<sup>7</sup> *In nomine Domini!*

I praise God for the mission you are giving among the prisoners. I have great compassion for them. But, please be sure not to go to them fasting.

With regard to the collège that the townspeople want, *ipsi vi-*

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<sup>3</sup>Release of a case from the local tribunal and transfer of the information regarding the proceedings to the Parlement in Paris.

<sup>4</sup>Pierre Séguier.

<sup>5</sup>Michel Le Masle, Prior of Les Roches near Fontevrault, secretary of Cardinal Richelieu, Canon and cantor of Notre-Dame de Paris. This last title made him collator, judge, and director of the primary schools in Paris.

<sup>6</sup>Cardinal Richelieu had committed himself by one of the clauses of the contract to have a building erected for the Missionaries and for the ordinands or retreatants to whom the former were to extend hospitality.

<sup>7</sup>The parish of Richelieu which had not yet been established. The Cardinal had promised to annex it to the Mission.

*derint*.<sup>8</sup> As for the nephew of that good canon, *O Jésus!* Monsieur, take him.

I forgot to put in an order for some altar-bread irons.

Let us talk about those who are supposed to come and see you. We are sending you three men from here and MM. [Messieurs] Codoing and Durot who are to come to you from Dauphiné, where they are now. I hope you will have them within ten days. Our Lord has greatly blessed their work in that region. The men from here are Messieurs Buissot,<sup>9</sup> Benoît,<sup>10</sup> and Gourrant.<sup>11</sup> You may keep either Messieurs Buissot or Benoît and M. Gourrant with you in Richelieu, and send one of the former to the mission in Luçon. I think it advisable for you to use the services of Messieurs Codoing and Durot in the duchy of Richelieu.

M. Gourrant sings; M. Benoît and M. Buissot know how to intone the psalms. M. Benoît teaches catechism well. Everybody invariably agrees that the fruit of a mission stems from the catechism lessons. A person of rank, saying that recently, added that all the Missionaries took pains to preach well but did not know how to teach catechism at all. He said that in my presence and that of a good number of people. In the name of God, Monsieur, tell the Company there about this. My thinking is that one of those who are to work should teach only the catechism for the adults and the other only the children's catechism, and they should speak twice a day. Some edifying stories can be brought into the cate-

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<sup>8</sup>*Let them see to it themselves.*

The Cardinal was planning to endow his town of Richelieu with a magnificent collège. He presented his ideas to Louis XIII, who authorized its foundation by two declarations: May 20 and September 11, 1640. (Cf. L.A. Bosseboeuf, *Histoire de Richelieu et des environs* [Tours: L. Péricat, 1890], pp. 321 ff.)

<sup>9</sup>Nicolas Buissot was born in Allainville (Yvelines), entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1630, and was ordained a priest in 1632.

<sup>10</sup>Benoît Bécu, born in Braches (Somme), March 21, 1602, was ordained a priest in 1627 and entered the Congregation of the Mission on May 14, 1637. In 1639, he went to found the establishment of La Rose and returned a few months later to Richelieu, where he was still living in 1646.

<sup>11</sup>This name does not appear in the catalogue of personnel. It is quite probable that M. Gourrant remained only a short time in the Congregation of the Mission.

chism lesson as a source of inspiration because, as I said, people point out that all the good results originate there.

We have given a few conferences here on how to go about teaching controversial truths. It seems to me that these men understand it fairly well, at least the first three. They have also learned M. Véron's method from him. Please, Monsieur, talk these matters over together every day and tell M. Perdu to please refresh his memory on the subject so that, when they leave Richelieu, they will know that those truths must be taught humbly and familiarly. Let them keep in mind that they are not going there for the heretics, but for the poor Catholics and that, nevertheless, if on the way the opportunity to instruct someone arises, they may do so gently and humbly, showing that what they say to them comes from deep compassion and love and not from indignation. I could not offer them a better example than your own and that of M. Souffiers. A nobleman from those parts told me that you go about it just as you should, instructing the Catholics and the Huguenots through them, and edifying both. Please, Monsieur, tell them this and especially that they should never challenge the ministers, or anyone, on any occasion whatsoever.

The men will leave tomorrow on the Poitiers coach, I think, because [it]<sup>12</sup> is bound to bring them within four leagues of Richelieu. However, I have given this letter to the Champigny messenger so that you may be advised of their departure and give them lodging.

You tell me that you do not have enough furniture. I shall send you a letter of credit so that you may draw up to one thousand livres in Tours; you can buy the furniture you need there.

If you have a feeling that people want to oblige you to things beyond our bulls, ask the Bishop of Chartres<sup>13</sup> to allow you to

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<sup>12</sup>Word forgotten in the original text.

<sup>13</sup>Léonor d'Estampes de Valençay was Bishop of Chartres from 1620 to 1641, and was then transferred to Reims. In 1921, Marcel Langlois wrote the biography of this prelate (*Léonor d'Estampes de Valençay*).

notify me, if you are unable to take care of the matter right then. If nothing can be done after all, *sit nomen Domini benedictum!*

I am, in His love, for M. Perdu whom I embrace, and for you, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, January 30, 1638

God is blessing abundantly the mission being given right now in Saint-Germain,<sup>14</sup> where the court is residing.

*At the bottom of the first page: M. Lambert*

**294. - TO ANTOINE LUCAS, IN SOUDE, LE MESNIL, OR BERGUES**  
Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You were quite right, Monsieur, not to accept the offers of the Vicomte de Soudé,<sup>1</sup> and you will do well never to accept any offer to support us. That is a fundamental rule of our Little Institute.

Well now, I suppose that you will have finished before receiving this letter and will next be going to make the visits you tell me you wish to make to the places where you have been. But when that is done, Monsieur, please go and rest in Montmirail until you have regained your strength, so that you may begin your work again in the villages which depend on Montmirail and the diocese of Troyes. Then we shall see if the Bishop of Soissons<sup>2</sup> would approve of our working in his diocese. I do not see how we can do so

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<sup>14</sup>Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

**Letter 294.** - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Desbordes, comptroller. Saint Vincent said of him one day: "That man loves God more than I could tell you, but with an intense love; what is more he is a man who has a marvelous gift for settling differences."

<sup>2</sup>Simon Le Gras (1624-1656).



in the city this Lent, because he was unwilling to assign us a church.

What can I say to you about that good but irritable boy except that I am very sorry he forgot himself so far as to speak to you the way M. du Chesne<sup>3</sup> informs me that he has, which your compassion makes you conceal. Well now, I see no other remedy than to dismiss him. But what will you do for a servant? Will you not be able to find one in Montmirail or in Champagne if you pay him? Please hire one, Monsieur, if you find someone; otherwise, we shall try to send you one from the house here.

I shall write, if possible, to M. du Chesne. But here comes someone to deprive me of that possibility. Please tell him in any case, that I was greatly consoled by his letter and that I shall not fail to write to him at the first opportunity.

The mission in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, where the court is residing, is moving forward and God is blessing it abundantly. I just saw what M. de la Salle<sup>4</sup> wrote to M. Dehorgny — who is on call at the seminary<sup>5</sup> — that without this assistance several thousand souls would be lost.

Please pray and have others pray for the Queen's pregnancy.<sup>6</sup>

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

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, January 30, 1638

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<sup>3</sup>At that time, Pierre du Chesne had belonged to the Congregation of the Mission only a few months. He became one of the best Missionaries of Saint Vincent, who entrusted him with the direction of the houses of Crécy (1641-1644), the Bons-Enfants (1644), the Mission of Ireland and Scotland (1646-1648), Marseilles (1653-1654), and Agde (1654). He also summoned him to attend the two General Assemblies convoked at Saint-Lazare during his lifetime. Pierre du Chesne died in Agde, November 3, 1654.

<sup>4</sup>Jean de la Salle was one of the Missionaries employed in Saint-Germain.

<sup>5</sup>At the internal seminary of Saint-Lazare. Saint Vincent had opened it in June 1637, and had entrusted its direction to Jean de la Salle, whom Jean Dehorgny was replacing temporarily. The Priests of the Mission use the name "internal seminary" for that period of formation which religious orders call the novitiate.

<sup>6</sup>Anne of Austria gave birth to a son, the future Louis XIV.

*Addressed:* Monsieur Lucas, Priest of the Mission, presently in Soudé, Le Mesnil, or Bergues<sup>7</sup>

295 - TO SAINT LOUISE

[February 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Enclosed is a letter from Mother Arbiste. Monsieur de la Salle notified me of the arrival of your Sisters.<sup>2</sup> He was going to introduce them to the sisters of the Charity<sup>3</sup> yesterday. Madame Chaumont told him that she would give them an écu so they could buy some food. I told her there was no need, that we would provide for them from another source. Give me a word of advice, please.

Mademoiselle Hardy is still urging me to call a meeting of the Ladies who promised her they would contribute. If I do not do it, I shall hurt her feelings; if I do it, it will be against my better judgment. I doubt that it will succeed the way things are. She expects those Ladies to go to the founding home<sup>4</sup> and would have everything done right there according to the order prescribed. I think it would be better to give up the capital of the established house rather than be subject to rendering so many accounts and overcoming so many difficulties, and to set up a new institution, leaving the former as it is, at least for some time. What do you think? If I thought she would agree to your suggestion of trying out a wet nurse and a goat at your house, that would be fine!

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<sup>7</sup>A locality in Aisne.

**Letter 295.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written at the time the Daughters of Charity arrived in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, a few days after no. 290.

<sup>2</sup>Barbe Angiboust and a companion.

<sup>3</sup>To the Ladies of Charity in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, whose president was Madame de Chaumont. Saint Vincent frequently referred to the members of the Confraternity of Charity as "sisters."

<sup>4</sup>The Couche.

I have taken the affair of your Charity<sup>5</sup> to heart and at times have some remorse about not having worked on it, but I cannot. The Temple business is taking up all my time and I shall be busy with it for a few more days.<sup>6</sup> When I ponder the matter, I realize that Providence is not allowing it to no purpose. I see nothing more common than the bad results of things done hastily. Would you believe that a mishap has already occurred in the establishment for girls in Montmorency?<sup>7</sup> They had already obtained the permission for enclosure; they have a house, a chapel, and all the rest of it. Nevertheless, people think that nuns should be called to take their place. And if it depended on me, I would do it. All this is said for you alone and not for anyone else.

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<sup>5</sup>The establishment of the Charity in La Chapelle.

<sup>6</sup>The establishment of a seminary in the house of the Temple in Paris. "This fine plan," writes Abelly (*op. cit.*, chap. XXXII, 1st ed., p. 151), "did not have the desired effect. Although M. Vincent had been asked to take care of the matter and for that purpose had stayed some time in the Temple, he was not free to act as he wished and could not succeed as he would have liked." "One of the first and dominant preoccupations" of the Commander de Sillery, as he himself wrote (*Vie de l'illustre serviteur de Dieu, Noël Brulart de Sillery*, p. 109), was "to work for the salvation of souls both by the establishment of seminaries and by regular visits to the parishes, churches, and people within the confines of the great priory of France entrusted to the jurisdiction and direction" of the Temple. With that in view, he consulted Fathers Gibieux and de Condren, of the Oratory; Father Binet, the Jesuit; Mother de la Trinité; and especially — let us allow him to speak — "a great servant of God in whom Our Lord in His goodness has given me absolute confidence. By the great esteem and reverence he has long had in his soul for the express and fundamental profession of our Order to expose its life for the defense and propagation of the Faith, he has a singular devotion to everything that concerns the good and the service of our religion. This holy individual, by all his wise advice, has continuously and strongly encouraged, exhorted, and strengthened me to consider seriously, for the glory of God, the fruit that many people will derive from this employment." It is easy to guess that this holy individual was the Commander's director, Vincent de Paul. The Grand Prior of France gave the Commander de Sillery the powers of Vicar General so that he might more freely bring his undertaking to a happy conclusion. But the Commander did not have the temporizing mind of Saint Vincent. He did not know how to profit as much as he should have by the lessons of experience. Opposition arose, even within his own Order, and he had to give up everything. One of his letters to the Grand Master, dated June 22, 1638, shows with what generosity and heroic resignation he accepted this painful trial. (*Ibid.*, pp. 107-122.)

<sup>7</sup>Principal town of a canton in Val-d'Oise. A house had been established there to receive and bring up girls born out of wedlock. The Company of the Blessed Sacrament was interested in the work and had taken on the expense of a schoolteacher. In exchange for its generosity, it received the right to send twelve little girls there each year. (Cf. René de Voyer d'Argenson, *op. cit.*, p. 69.)

The good Pastor of La Chapelle<sup>8</sup> is supposed to come to dinner here today with his brother so as to see what he has to do about his illness, for it has now been identified as what you feared. *O mon Dieu*, what poor creatures we are!

The day before yesterday, Madame Goussault was running a fever which they were afraid was going to last. Take care of your health, I beg of you.

I am your servant.

V.D.

I am being compelled to rush the Temple affair which I fear will collapse in the near future. I say it and say it again, and they pass over it all the same. Humility obliges me to defer and reason makes me fear. *In nomine Domini!*

#### 296. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Saint-Lazare, Tuesday morning [1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am sending you back the papers.<sup>2</sup> Please return them as soon as possible and see that you receive a signed copy.

If you do not have the keys, please have them picked up here.

Madame Pelletier has just spoken to me about her furniture; she would like it put in some other small room. She makes no mention of putting it somewhere else. I told her we would discuss it and that we must aim at placing everything in common and at doing

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<sup>8</sup>Jean Paradis, who died in May 1646.

**Letter 296.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The sentence, "We must reflect a little on some way of preparing the Sisters to teach school," allows us to surmise that this letter preceded by a very short time no. 297, in which we find the solution proposed by Saint Louise.

<sup>2</sup>Probably some documents pertaining to the establishment of the Foundlings.

away with singularities. Well, that language seems somewhat new to her.

That good woman from Le Mans seems insecure to me. She has done a lot of stipulating and delaying.

We must reflect a little on some way of preparing the Sisters to teach school. The latter says she has taught in this town and elsewhere. We must see whether we shall give her a try.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V.D.

297. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Blessed be God that your illness is not serious! Please do whatever you can to get well.

We came to a decision on your report concerning the Foundings in two meetings with the officers of the Hôtel-Dieu Charity. Next Sunday we shall communicate the decision, which I shall arrange in the form of a rule, to Madame Pelletier to see if she will be willing to follow it. This will take place at Madame Goussault's home in presence of the officers. The entire company considers it essential for that house to depend on the superioress of the Daughters of Charity, as I wrote you, and for you to go and spend a week or so there, if your health permits.

The Ladies are going to the Hôtel-Dieu today. Please offer their persons and their work to His Divine Majesty.

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**Letter 297.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter is from the earliest beginnings of the work of the Foundings.

I do not expect much from the Ursulines' way of communicating with your Sisters.<sup>2</sup> Please send them there, nevertheless.

I think it is better to keep that young woman with you for some time and to have Madame Goussault see her along with the one from Nogent. There is no need to send her the one from Saint-Marceau<sup>3</sup> since she is already on active duty.

I bid you good day and am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

297a. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LA CHAPELLE

[1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You had good reason to grumble and complain interiorly about me for not having answered or visited you. Your love will forgive me, please, and will attribute the blame to difficulties and not to affection. God knows that I lack neither.

I spoke to M. Pavillon about your son. I think it would be well for him to finish his theology, be ordained, and practice for some

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<sup>2</sup>Saint Louise's solution (mentioned in no. 296) to the problem of preparing her Daughters to teach was to have them instructed in that art by the Ursuline nuns.

<sup>3</sup>A section of Paris.

**Letter 297a.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter. The text was published in the *Annales* (1958), pp. 218-221 and reprinted in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, pp. 19-20.

<sup>1</sup>Date imposed by the content of the letter: the situation of Michel Le Gras, still hesitant about his vocation; the presence of Pavillon in Paris or the vicinity; the availability of M. du Coudray, appointed Superior of the house in Toul that same year, 1638.

time the exercises of piety suitable for ecclesiastics. Once he has done all that, I shall make no objection to the above-mentioned Monsieur Pavillon's receiving him. Otherwise, the young man would be useless to the said Monsieur Pavillon, and an unbearable burden to himself when he found himself in the mountains, at the farthest end of the kingdom,<sup>2</sup> doing nothing, and unqualified for any employment.

In the name of God, Mademoiselle, take my advice in this matter. I know what is involved. I hope that, if your son does what I have just said, he will never be in need of good employment. If God allows me to live, I promise you that I shall take care of him as if he were of my own blood. Be at peace then in his regard.

If he were ready for a post, I could place him tomorrow in the service of *Monsieur*, the King's brother<sup>3</sup> — I have been asked for someone for him — or have him given a canonry quite close to Lyons in a new chapter foundation being started by M. de Saint-Chamond.<sup>4</sup> He has given me the task of providing him with people whom I judge suitable, up to the number of eight. In short, he will not have to wait long, be assured of that, provided he does what I am telling you.

We shall try then to send M. du Coudray to Liancourt<sup>5</sup> on Saturday. Please see that there is a horse here for him tomorrow evening.

I am worried about that good lady's illness. I am going to

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<sup>2</sup>Alet, situated in the valley of the Aude, thirty kilometers south of Carcassonne, at the foot of the Pyrenees.

<sup>3</sup>Gaston d'Orléans.

<sup>4</sup>Melchior Mitte de Miolans, Marquis de Saint-Chamond, Seigneur de Chevières. He was sent to Rome as extraordinary Ambassador and founded a collegial chapter in 1634 for which he had a chapel built in Saint-Chamond (diocese of Lyons). He died in Paris on September 10, 1649.

<sup>5</sup>Locality in Oise. Saint Louise stayed there several times.

celebrate Holy Mass for her intention and pray to God for you. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in La Chapelle<sup>6</sup>

298. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[1638]<sup>1</sup>

After speaking of the intrigues in which Madame Pelletier was engaging with the ecclesiastical and judicial authorities to keep Saint Vincent and the Ladies of Charity out of the administration of the Founding Home and to remain its sole mistress, Saint Louise adds: "*But I am confident that the good God will be able to derive His glory from this unpleasant experience. I implore this of Him with all my heart, asking Him also to give you good health for the same reason. I hope because of your goodness that you will make us sharers in the merit of your sufferings and holy sacrifices, since you are aware of our need.*"

299. - TO ROBERT DE SERGIS, IN AIGUILLON OR TOULOUSE

[Around February 21, 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I cannot tell you the consolation I have received from the bless-

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<sup>6</sup>Village then near Paris, now incorporated in the city of Paris itself. The Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity was located there from 1636-1642.

**Letter 298.** - Monsignor Baunard, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

<sup>1</sup>This letter seems closely connected with no. 297.

**Letter 299.** - According to Coste, the original autograph letter belonged to the wife of General Derrécagaix, 5 rue du Regard, Paris.

<sup>1</sup>In a letter definitely dated February 21, 1638 (no. 307), Saint Vincent spoke of matters also treated in this letter. It seems reasonable to conjecture that both were written about the same time.



ing Our Lord has been pleased to grant your mission in Montpezat.<sup>2</sup> But I confess that I have been and still am quite worried about your working so long and hard for three months. I am very much afraid that, if you do not take a prolonged rest, you will collapse, and so will M. Brunet. In the name of God, Monsieur, get some rest and have your bad eye and throat treated in Aiguillon or Agen, if you have not already done so. I am afraid that as soon as you arrive in Toulouse they will overburden you with work. I would really like to tell you not to go back there, but what would we say to the Archbishop?<sup>3</sup> I wrote him that you would be coming to see him immediately after the mission in Montpezat.

We are obliged, from another quarter, to give a mission which Monsieur de la Marguerie<sup>4</sup> founded in Angoumois for every five years; it is due at Easter. If your illness does not prevent you from going to Toulouse, please tell the aforesaid Archbishop that I most humbly ask his pardon for our not being able as yet to serve him on a regular basis and for being compelled to use you on occasions such as this one after Easter. At that time, entreat him to allow you to go and preach the said mission in La Marguerie<sup>5</sup> and in two or three other small villages belonging to it. To do that, you will have to go down to Bordeaux by way of the Garonne, and from there to Bourg,<sup>6</sup> between Bordeaux and Blaye. Then, from there, you will have to go to Barbezieux, which is two days away, and to La Marguerie, two or three leagues farther. But you will have to go as far as Angoulême to get the Vicar General's permis-

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<sup>2</sup>Commune in Lot-et-Garonne, a district in Agen.

<sup>3</sup>Charles de Montchal (1628-1651). He was one of the most remarkable prelates of the seventeenth century because of his piety, his zeal, his learning, and his firmness in defending the rights of the Church against the encroachments of the State. He died in 1651.

<sup>4</sup>On October 31, 1633, Elie Laisné, Sieur de la Marguerie, had given Saint Vincent two hundred livres out of the town hall revenue "on condition that every five years he would send three priests and a brother to give missions for four months, round trip included, in the diocese of Angoulême." (Arch. Nat. M 211, file 1.)

<sup>5</sup>A locality in Charente-Maritime.

<sup>6</sup>Principal town of a canton in the district of Blaye.

sion in the absence of the Bishop,<sup>7</sup> who is with the Queen of England.<sup>8</sup> He asked me to send someone to work in his diocese at the earnest request of his Vicar General, to whom you will convey my regret at our being able to work for the present only in those villages. Express to him also our great gratitude for the favor we owe him.

I am so consoled by everything you told me, that I could not refrain from mentioning it to you once again here. I sent the letter you wrote me to the Duchesse d'Aiguillon; please write to her more in detail.

I am sending you the letter — unsealed — which I wrote to the Archbishop of Toulouse. If your illness has detained you in Aiguillon, please send it to him. If it reaches you in Toulouse, please seal it and deliver it to him.

I am writing to M. Mestre to go along with some letters he received from home. Please forward them to him by some sure means. It is his old father writing to him. I shall try to do the same for M.Hopille.<sup>9</sup> I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Monsieur de Sergis, Priest of the Mission, presently in Aiguillon or Toulouse

300. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[February 1638]<sup>1</sup>

*Monsieur,*

*Sister Turgis is very upset because the sergeant of M. de Castillon's*

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<sup>7</sup>Jacques Cardinal du Perron (1637-1646).

<sup>8</sup>Henriette-Marie, sister of Louis XIII and wife of Charles I.

<sup>9</sup>Vicar General of the diocese of Agen.

**Letter 300.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>It is obvious that nos. 300, 301, 302, 303, and 304 are related. No. 303 indicates that it is

*company came to tell her that he will be sending soldiers to lodge in the front part of the building and in the children's quarters. They will be noisy. If you think it well, when she returns there, she can refuse to accommodate them, confident of the backing of the Duchesse d'Aiguillon or the Chancellor's wife,<sup>2</sup> until you can obtain a prohibition from the Queen. If you think something else would be better, please let her know by way of this messenger, if it is not she.*

*I am, Monsieur, your most humble and most grateful daughter and servant.*

L. DE MARILLAC

Thursday

Addressed: *Monsieur Vincent*

301. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[February 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

I have just written to Madame Séguier, the Chancellor's wife. I am sending her your letter and a petition I drew up in the name of the Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu. It is addressed to the Chancellor<sup>2</sup> and informs him that they rented a house for the Daughters of Charity and the foundlings, that the inhabitants have sent you soldiers, and that they cannot stay in your house, where there are no men, without endangering the purity of the Sisters, or without scandal. Taking these things into consideration, will he please forbid the inhabitants to send the aforesaid soldiers to your house and forbid the soldiers to go there. I am asking his wife to

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winter. Besides, the move of the foundlings to another house took place at the beginning of 1638.

<sup>2</sup>Madame Séguier.

**Letter 301.** - The original autograph letter is the property of the international office of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society in Paris, 5 rue du Pré-aux-Clercs.

<sup>1</sup>This letter is the response to no. 300.

<sup>2</sup>Pierre Séguier.

present this to the Chancellor. And because it may be that the matter will not move so quickly that everything can be taken care of today, it would be well to send for your Pastor and ask him to use his influence, either with the people so that they will provide other quarters for the soldiers, or with the soldiers so that they will stay elsewhere — in return for a demi-écu more or less — in order to give you two days. I am going, meanwhile, to Madame Goussault's house to ask her to send M. Grandnom<sup>3</sup> to expedite the matter.

Your son is doing well. Did you send him the certificate? He told me that he fears the excellence of the priesthood, and that is good.

Please do something soon regarding the soldiers, through the Pastor.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am. . . .

### 302. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[February 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have not seen Jacqueline at all since she told me four days ago that she was bringing her to you so that you might see her. I promised her I would talk to you about it.<sup>2</sup>

I shall be on my guard with regard to that curate from Nanterre, now the Pastor,<sup>3</sup> with regard to the girl.

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<sup>1</sup>Remi de Grandnom, Madame Goussault's intendant.

**Letter 302.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>2</sup>See no. 300, n. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Jacqueline wanted to present to Saint Louise one of her nieces who felt called to the vocation of a Daughter of Charity.

<sup>4</sup>Paul Beurrier.

Today I shall try to see the Duchesse d'Aiguillon concerning your soldiers. The Chancellor's wife was not able to do anything.

You will have to talk to Madame Goussault about that house. It would be desirable for you to be in a parish other than this one for many reasons.

Since one channel does not end because of another, see whether you can accomplish anything by means of that soldier you were thinking about, using his influence with his captain, and through him with M. de Castelnaud.<sup>4</sup>

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

### 303. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[February 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Tomorrow morning I shall send you Monsieur Soufliers or M. Bécu for the exhortation and confession.

I looked at what you wrote<sup>2</sup> and am going to tell Madame Goussault about it or send it to her.

The admonition not to joke about those little creatures<sup>3</sup> seems fitting to me.

I saw the Duchesse d'Aiguillon yesterday. She told me that she had commissioned the person who guides her<sup>4</sup> to go and see M. de

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<sup>4</sup>Probably Louis-François de Gourdon-Genouillac, Marquis de Castelnaud, Captain of the Scottish company; or Jacques Castelnaud, who died in 1658, a Marshal of France.

**Letter 303.** - According to Coste, the original autograph letter was in Amiens at the house of the Daughters of Charity, 127 rue Beauvais. This house has been closed and the present location of the letter is unknown.

<sup>1</sup>See no. 300, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Perhaps a report concerning the establishment of the Foundlings.

<sup>3</sup>The foundlings.

<sup>4</sup>Probably M. Dauzenat, her chaplain.

Castelnau. I instructed the Sisters from the Charity<sup>5</sup> to put pressure on the chaplain concerning the matter. If that fails, it would be better to deal with the quartermaster-sergeant. If you do not send someone to M. de Veines, I do not know whom to recommend to you with regard to this matter. I hope we shall hear from the Duchesse today, or tomorrow I shall send you a man for M. de Veines.

I really think it would be good for you to go and spend a few days in the house for the foundlings, and for the Sisters to come to La Chapelle once a month. May God be pleased to give me the time to be there.

Marie, from Saint-Sulpice, has two bed-valences made from winding-sheets, because the house is quite new and the windows do not close properly. Once the winter is over, we shall have to draw up a regulation about that. We do not have any.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

### 304. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[February 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Here comes a job for you concerning the relocation of the foundlings and the order to be maintained in their new establishment. Please work on it tomorrow, Mademoiselle, and on Satur-

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<sup>5</sup>The establishment of the Foundlings.

Letter 304. - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>See no. 300, n. 1.

day send me what you have done. I told Madame Pelletier that we wish her to be subject to you with regard to the management. She told me to let her know when she was to be subject to the officers and in what instances to you. I think that, for purely temporal matters, she should be under the good Ladies; but, for spiritual matters, such as the direction of the Sisters, the wet nurses, and the little runaway children whose number will be increasing, that is when she should deal with you. To that end, she should let you know from time to time what is going on, every week for example or, at least, every two weeks.

Jacqueline came here to the house this morning without saying anything to me about her niece. She just had someone ask me for the answer to your letter of the day before yesterday. I told her that I gave it to you yesterday.

I wrote to the chaplain<sup>2</sup> of the Duchesse<sup>3</sup> about your soldiers. He sent me word that he would speak to the Duchesse about the matter and give me an answer. But as nothing is certain concerning things that depend upon the great, I have been told that, as a last resort, we might have to rent a room and a bed and give it to them. I shall try to go there tomorrow or the day after, if I do not receive an answer tomorrow morning. I am, meanwhile, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Thursday evening

You will see in the enclosed note from Madame Goussault her wishes concerning what I wrote to you.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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<sup>2</sup>Dauzenat.

<sup>3</sup>The Duchesse d'Aiguillon.

305. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[February 18, 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You have not found any wet nurses at all in the country yet. That is why I think that, while waiting, you would do well to take the one being offered to you from the Hôtel-Dieu; she is so good.

It really seems to me that you need a more spacious house and that the Ladies would do well to look for another one or take the one you mentioned to me.

I cannot possibly go to the Bons-Enfants today. I hope to be there tomorrow for dinner and to come and see you from there. It would be difficult to talk to you in the midst of so many people at the collège. I shall see. If need be, I shall send you word.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

Ash Wednesday

306. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, IN RICHELIEU

Paris, February 20, 1638

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have read and reread your letter of the ninth of this month with an extraordinary consolation, tempered a little by good M. Perdu's

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**Letter 305.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter belongs to the beginnings of the work of the Foundlings, i.e., to 1638, and, consequently, to February 18, since it is dated Ash Wednesday. No. 302 shows that at that date Saint Louise was looking for a house for the foundlings.

**Letter 306.** - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.



slight illness. I do not commend him to you, because I am sure you are doing everything you can for him. But who is taking care of your health? I am asking Our Lord to look after it Himself.

I sent on to Toul the letter you wrote to M. Dehorgny. That affair is abating somewhat. We are negotiating with M. Fleury, the nephew, who is a Doctor of the Sorbonne.<sup>1</sup>

I am well pleased with what you told me about M. des Roches-Chamian's<sup>2</sup> little priory and about the two farms and the two houses. Since Providence has caused us to come across that good priest living there, we must allow him to take his time, to have the vines tended, and to repair that section of the surrounding wall that has fallen.

I have no doubt that the Loudun grafts cost the most. Blessed be God!

I shall be very happy to see that architect from Pontoise and the mason concerning the buildings.

You did well to give an inventory of the furniture to the Bishop of Chartres.<sup>3</sup> You will do even better to have mugs and forks made like ours so that you can begin as soon as possible to take your meals in portions.

Oh! how moved I still am by what you told me about the kind of approbation the Bishop of Poitiers<sup>4</sup> gave the contract concluded with the Cardinal,<sup>5</sup> and by your telling me that you are going to Poitiers to thank that good prelate! I am also moved by what you told me concerning the goodness and gentleness with which the

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<sup>1</sup>François de Fleury of the diocese of Langres secured for himself a canonry in the diocese of Verdun. He approved the book, *De la fréquente communion*, and was presented by the Jansenists to Queen Marie-Louise de Gonzague on her departure for Poland to act as her chaplain. His relationship with Saint Vincent and the Missionaries sent to that country was always excellent, even cordial, as is evident from the letters of the Saint, who esteemed him highly. He died in France, early in November 1658. Part of his correspondence with Mother Angélique is extant.

<sup>2</sup>Michel Le Masle.

<sup>3</sup>Léonor d'Estampes de Valençay (1620-1641).

<sup>4</sup>Henri-Louis Chasteignier de la Rocheposay (1611-1651).

<sup>5</sup>Cardinal Richelieu.

Bishop of Chartres has negotiated with you and with everyone. I shall thank him and tell him in good time how I thank God for the attention you have had the Company give to what I told you concerning the catechism lessons and sermons. Please remind them often of those things.

I am well satisfied with the arrangements you told me you are making for the mission: (1) in the duchy; (2) for finishing the one in Richelieu. Then you shall really have to establish the Charity. I hope to send you an excellent Daughter of Charity for that purpose.<sup>6</sup> She does bloodletting, administers medicines, and gives enemas. She is the one who preferred the service of the poor to that of the great lady whom I mentioned to you.<sup>7</sup> She is in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, where a Charity worthy of note is being set up. Among its members are the lady-in-waiting, the lady of the bed-chamber, and the Queen's maids of honor, who are giving service themselves with admirable fervor. They had a little trouble at that mission because of the low necklines, but God was pleased to draw no little glory from the affair.

In the name of God, Monsieur, we must be very circumspect in explaining the sixth commandment. We shall one day be in a great deal of trouble because of that. Call this to the Company's attention often and also advise them not to do anything in the procession except that which is quite simple, as I have so often said.

As for the title you will assume for the vicarial records, how about putting down parish administrative assistant until I consult someone about it? With regard to alms, give a *double*<sup>8</sup> to each one who asks; if he is being catechized, give him two *liards* more or

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<sup>6</sup>Barbe Angiboust.

<sup>7</sup>Madame de Combalet, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, had begged Saint Vincent to send a Daughter of Charity to work in her house and for the poor of her parish. He sent Barbe Angiboust, who after four or five days returned to her previous work. She preferred to devote herself entirely to the service of the poor, not to the service of a great lady, a choice which the Saint greatly admired (cf. no. 224).

<sup>8</sup>The *double* was worth about two *deniers*; the *liard* about three. These coins symbolize the smallest sum or the smallest quantity.

less, according to the person's character. But for the sick, if the Bishop does not provide the necessary funds for them, you should contribute fifteen or twenty sous a week, which you can have placed in the alms-dish of the woman taking up the collection. But what will you do with regard to remuneration for acting as pastor? I am sending you two hundred livres, which will be given to the Champigny messenger tomorrow. On the next trip, we shall give him the altar-bread irons.

M. Codoing and M. Durot are now in Richelieu. O Monsieur, how God has blessed their labors! Please embrace them and the whole Company for me, as I do in spirit with all possible humility and affection.

The mission in Saint-Germain will come to a close in four days with a very special blessing, anticipated by some little occasions for practicing patience. How valuable that will be for us and what a triumph for God! M. Grenu is also receiving special assistance from God in Gascony and M. de Sergis likewise.

The Company is doing well, thank God, and sends you greetings.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Since writing this letter, I reflected that it would be well for you to take the title of parish curate of Richelieu, while awaiting the union and the way it will be formulated.

*Addressed:* Monsieur Lambert, Priest of the Mission, presently in Richelieu

307. - TO ANTOINE LUCAS, IN MONTMIRAIL

Paris, February 21, 1638

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am writing you these lines in a bit of a hurry, asking you please to take care of your health and M. Caignet's<sup>1</sup> and to get some rest after such arduous work before you begin the mission again. When you are rested, you can start working in the villages belonging to the diocese of Troyes and Montmirail.

Last Sunday, I had M. Souffiers write you a letter requesting the same thing of you at that time. I also asked you to send M. du Chesne back to us and I would send you M. Callon in his place. But, since a slight indisposition does not permit him that little satisfaction at present, he is returning to Aumale, where he will be able to do something in the surrounding area.<sup>2</sup>

I went to see your brother at the Saint-Michel bridge<sup>3</sup> to ask him to send the man who is lodging with M. Belin to the mission. But he told me that he was not in town, that he was still in Milly,<sup>4</sup> and that on his return he would send him to Rueil. I have neither heard that he did so nor that he returned.

I am sending you a letter from the Cévennes. The Company is doing fairly well, thank God.

The mission in Saint-Germain is coming to a close with a blessing although, in the beginning, they had occasion to practice the holy virtue of patience. There are very few in the King's household who have not gone to confession with the people, and with a devotion worthy of giving edification. The firm stand taken

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**Letter 307.** - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Madame Goussault's confessor bore this name; he may be the person mentioned here.

<sup>2</sup>Although he was a member of the Congregation of the Mission, Louis Callon was living in Aumale, his birthplace.

<sup>3</sup>In Paris.

<sup>4</sup>There are two localities with this name: one in Oise and the other in Essonne.

against low-necked dresses gave rise to that practice of patience. The King told M. Pavillon that he was greatly pleased with all the exercises of the mission, that that was the way one should work, and that he would give this testimony everywhere. I had great difficulty sending men to that place while the court was in residence but, since His Majesty had done me the honor of informing me that he wanted it that way, we had to surmount our difficulties. The ladies who had the hardest time in the beginning are now so fervent that they have become members of the Charity and serve the poor on their day. They also went out in four groups to collect money in the town. They are the Queen's maids of honor.

Messieurs Lambert, Perdu, Buissot, Codoing, Benoît,<sup>5</sup> and Gourrant are in Richelieu; Messieurs Grenu and Savinier in the duchy of Aiguillon, in Gascony, where God is blessing them greatly, as He did M. de Sergis and M. Brunet. M. de Sergis is returning to Toulouse where the Archbishop is waiting for him with great impatience.

I close, recommending myself to the prayers of Messieurs Caignet and du Chesne. Please, Monsieur, convey our news and recommendations to Messieurs Mouton<sup>6</sup> and Boucher.<sup>7</sup> I hope to write to them Wednesday and to send you M. Boudet in M. du Chesne's place.

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Please pay M. Octobre<sup>8</sup> the postage punctually.

*Addressed:* Monsieur Lucas, Priest of the Mission, in Montmirail

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<sup>5</sup>Benoît Bécu.

<sup>6</sup>Jacques Mouton, born in Pontoise, entered the Congregation in 1632.

<sup>7</sup>Léonard Boucher, born August 29, 1610, entered the Congregation of the Mission on November 12, 1632 and was ordained a priest on September 23, 1634.

<sup>8</sup>Concierge of the Château de Montmirail.

308. - TO MOTHER DE LA TRINITE, IN TROYES

My very dear Mother,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Here again is someone's pen thanking you because you are ever giving us new reasons to do so by so many acts of kindness which the Holy Spirit continually suggests to you from day to day for our good and that of the souls in your diocese. You were not content, dear Mother, with suggesting, guiding, and bringing our establishment to completion with such care, solicitude, and almost continual labors. You added to that the offer of your house as a lodging for us and for the ordinands' retreat.

O my dear Mother! how that touches my heart, making me see the state of a truly Christian and religious soul that has reached the highest point of perfection to which either of those states can raise a soul in the practice of true charity! To God be the glory, my dear Mother, for having been pleased to lift you up to a state of such great goodness; to us, eternal gratitude for the great good you incessantly do for us; and to you, dear Mother, a degree of glory in heaven which corresponds to the goodness Our Lord has placed in your dear soul! Here are the gratitude and the wishes that can be offered to you by the soul who is the most obliged to you in the world, my dear Mother, and who considers you his dearest and most amiable Mother.

Yesterday I saw one of the two small apartments in the front part of the Bishop's house.<sup>1</sup> It is true, it would be advantageous to have both of them because of the windows and other legal rights. However, I think the lodging we need in Troyes is still more urgent. How would we manage in regard to that one without the

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**Letter 308.** - The original autograph letter is at the Carmel of Troyes in Saint-Germain, 10120 Saint-André-les-Vergers.

<sup>1</sup>René de Breslay, Bishop of Troyes (1604-1641), had a house in Paris on the main street of the faubourg Saint-Michel, which he offered to Saint Vincent for the needs of the Missionaries in Troyes. (Cf. no. 292, n. 1.)

assistance of what the Bishop wishes to give us! If it were being sold only at the price it is worth, that would be fine! But it is being offered for six thousand livres, although I fear it will be hard to get two hundred for it in rent; for it is not being rented. A Capuchin Father had taken it and had placed a devout woman there to make a home for a few poor people who had recently been converted. But I do not know how it is that there is no longer anyone there except that good woman and two poor girls who are leaving. On the other hand, to bargain with our benefactor, *O Jésus!* dear Mother, we must not do that. That is why, with all due deference, I think, dear Mother, that we should leave matters as they are.<sup>2</sup>

The Commander has not deemed it necessary to ratify the Bishop's foundation, since the said gentleman wanted that only because of the private agreement previously signed between that good gentleman and myself. He says that by his returning the original of the contract which he had, my sending ours back, and both being torn up, there is no need to ratify anything. That, dear Mother, is what I most humbly entreat you to communicate to the Bishop. I have never seen anyone give evidence of feeling more satisfaction over the action he has taken for the good of his diocese than his nephew, M. Bault. Certainly, dear Mother, the kindness with which he received me and negotiated with us is unimaginable.

Our mission at court will soon be closing. The poor Missionaries have worked at it incessantly from morning till night, preaching, catechizing, hearing general confessions from morning till night, and they are so tired that they can do no more.

We shall have those destined for Troyes rest and recuperate a little in order to go there on the eve of Passion Sunday.<sup>3</sup> The Bishop thought it would be well for them to begin their work at

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<sup>2</sup>The Priests of the Mission first settled in the village of Sancey, in a house rented to Sébastien Gouault, a townsman from Troyes. As it was rather small, the Commander de Sillery bought them the house situated at the right corner of the faubourg Croucels and the rue des Bas-Clos in Troyes. They moved there on August 25, 1640.

<sup>3</sup>March 20.

that time with the ordinands' retreat. And I, who trouble my dear, good Mother too much, shall close by most humbly imploring her to offer us to God asking Him to forgive the many faults we incessantly commit in the project He has entrusted to us. I am for my dearest Mother's holy community and in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Mother, your most humble, and most grateful and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

The good doctor, whom M. Galleman had appointed his successor in the parish of Aumale,<sup>4</sup> is working on the memoirs or the life of that blessed man and another priest or two.

Paris, February 25, 1638

*Addressed:* Reverend Mother de la Trinité, Prioress of the Carmelite monastery in the faubourg of Troyes, in Troyes

### 309. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1638, around February]<sup>1</sup>

Blessed be God for taking that little soul in a state of readiness, so that we have good reason to believe she is most happy! I am going to send you M. Bécu and someone else.

It will be hard for me to see M. Laisné.<sup>2</sup> If he approves the marriage, we must not be upset. He will show his secretary what is required, if he does not already know.

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<sup>4</sup>Louis Callon. His notes have been drawn upon by the author of Jacques Galleman's biography.

**Letter 309.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written in Madame Goussault's lifetime, after the work of the Foundlings had begun, at the time Saint Vincent was looking for a house for them. (Cf. nos. 302 and 305.)

<sup>2</sup>Elie Laisné, Sieur de la Marguerie.



I think the painting of the Virgin and Saint Joseph holding the Child Jesus by the hand is best for the little foundlings.<sup>3</sup>

Madame Goussault sent me word that she would be going to your house today to begin her retreat. If that is so, will you be away? I think it would be well for you to write her a note to find out what she intends.

I saw Madame de Herse, the President's wife, yesterday and told her what I have told you.

I forgot to write Madame Goussault to tell her to take the meditation on death and the particular judgment after the first one. Please tell her that, and also that it would be better for her to recall the sins I mentioned to her so as to meditate on the ones she considers appropriate.

The matter of housing is often on my mind. Good day, Mademoiselle. Possess your heart in peace. I am your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

### 310. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1638, around February]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

I think you would do well to have that little child buried in the cemetery and to send someone to ask the Pastor to come and see you. State the matter as it is until we find out how things will be handled. What comes to my mind now is that we should give

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<sup>3</sup>This painting was perhaps the work of Saint Louise. The Daughters of Charity of 85 rue Réaumur, Paris, believe they possess it.

**Letter 310.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written shortly after the establishment of the Foundlings. It seems to belong not far from nos. 295 and 309.

something to the Pastor and the grave-digger annually to bury all of them. For today, you will have to ask him to send his curate to get the body and instruct the grave-digger to prepare the little grave. Ask him also to tell each of them how the matter stands, and that this is an experiment we would like to try.

I feel urged more than ever to conclude the business concerning the Charity.<sup>2</sup> Ask God to give me some time to work at it. My situation is pitiful; I have no time at all. God grant me eternity!

When you are able to go to Rueil, the Pastor has informed me that he will accept the Sister I send him.

I am your servant.

V. D.

I am not saying anything to you about Madame Pelletier. I just wrote to Mademoiselle<sup>3</sup> about the child's death. She informed me yesterday that she would send you another one today, if it is convenient. Her letter is enclosed.

### 311. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have instructed our good Brother Nicolas<sup>1</sup> to pass by Richelieu on his way to visit M. Grenu in Gascony. Please do not delay his going there more than a day and, if you can, write to the said M. Grenu and have everyone in the Company who can do so write to him.

I think this messenger will find you about to begin the mission

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<sup>2</sup>The Charity of La Chapelle. (Cf. no. 295.)

<sup>3</sup>Mademoiselle Virole, treasurer of the Ladies of Charity.

**Letter 311.** - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Nicolas Cormon, a coadjutor brother, was born around 1603, entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1633, and was admitted to vows November 13, 1643.

in Richelieu again. I entreat you, Monsieur, to recommend prudence more than ever when explaining the sixth commandment and handling the questions people ask about it. If we are not careful, the Company will suffer for it some day.

Conduct the processions without a lot of ceremony; I would even say without having the children dressed up in anything but the surplices found on the premises. People have greatly criticized both the one and the other, although the Bishop of Alet<sup>2</sup> has done the first, and with regard to the second there were only a few children dressed in albs. It is God's wish that, in this way, we be brought to practice patience a little and that this proceed from a desire to bring about the memorable conversion of some outstanding souls.

I did not have the honor of seeing the Bishop of Chartres<sup>3</sup> at all, and it was not desirable. I shall do so, please God, when it is time.

It would be well for you to set up the Charity and to let the Bishop of Chartres know about it so that he can find out from His Eminence<sup>4</sup> if he approves of it. It would also be well for you to offer him that Daughter of Charity.<sup>5</sup>

I close, recommending myself as well as the present state of the mission to your holy prayers. I greet the Company most humbly and most affectionately, being, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Vallegrand, March 3, 1638

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<sup>2</sup>Nicolas Pavillon.

<sup>3</sup>Léonor d'Estampes de Valençay (1620-1641).

<sup>4</sup>Cardinal Richelieu.

<sup>5</sup>Barbe Angiboust.

312. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[March 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Jeanne, the Daughter of Charity in this parish, has committed many faults, on account of which the Pastor,<sup>2</sup> the officers, and M. de Vincy decided today that she must be changed. I entreat you, Mademoiselle, to send us another who has a more gentle and more accommodating disposition, and do this by tomorrow morning so that she will not have the time to put together an intrigue like the others; it is inconceivable how apt she is at it. Now I think, nevertheless, that we must take her back for the Hôtel-Dieu or somewhere else, so that justice may be accompanied by mercy. Would you believe that she gave Jacqueline a slap in the face, and that she does anything she pleases, and a number of things without saying anything about them, such as treating a patient without permission? And what is worse, she informed the Lenten preacher of some of the faults of the Ladies and began to have them preached about. Well now, whom will you be able to give us without inconveniencing yourself? Take care of it.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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**Letter 312.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written during Lent, a few days, it seems, before no. 313, which obviously belongs to 1638.

<sup>2</sup>M. de Lestocq, Pastor of the parish of Saint-Laurent.

313. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[March 1638]<sup>1</sup>

I returned from Pontoise last night. Here is the answer to your last letter. We shall really have to see about the Foundlings. A meeting is being held today at the home of Madame Goussault, the President's wife. I would like you to attend and to write to the said lady, asking her to send her carriage for you. It is true that I think you will be asked by Madame de Beaufort, the superior, to attend the meeting at Saint-Etienne. If so, I think it would be advisable for you to go there and to let me know how you feel about M. Dieu's suggestion, and that of M. Foucauld, to the gentlemen of the chapter. In addition, please let me know if what Madame Goussault has told me is true, that you know of a few simple, devout young women who are willing to devote themselves to the spiritual needs of the women in the *Légat*<sup>2</sup> in place of the fourteen Ladies.<sup>3</sup> I think it would be better that way; otherwise we shall always be filled with apprehension lest the aforesaid Ladies catch some disease there. Please send me your answer at Madame Goussault's house around three o'clock.

It is true that I have been told things are going badly at the Hôtel-Dieu. It is to be hoped that your health will allow you to go and spend two or three days there. Look into it.

I sent word to Jeanne, from Saint-Laurent, to go to La Chapelle.

The Ladies of Saint-Sulpice are extraordinarily fond of their

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**Letter 313.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written during the lifetime of Madame Goussault, while the Sisters had their Motherhouse at La Chapelle. The passage referring to the Foundlings leads us to favor the year 1638.

<sup>2</sup>A ward in the Hôtel-Dieu reserved for contagious diseases. It was named after Cardinal du Prat, the Papal Legate in France, who had it built around 1530.

<sup>3</sup>Fourteen ladies, chosen every three months at the time of the Ember Days by and from the Ladies of Charity, had the duty of instructing and consoling the sick at the Hôtel-Dieu. (Cf. Coste, *op. cit.*, p. 14.)

Sister Jeanne. We shall hurt their feelings if we take her away from them. She will have to be warned of her faults.

I hope that your son's illness is nothing but an upset and that his health will be better after that little fever.

You are right in choosing Marie-Denise<sup>4</sup> for Saint-Etienne.<sup>5</sup> I have no confidence in that Charity because of the frame of mind of the people who have a hand in it and because there are some men interfering with it.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

### 314. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[March 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have been back at the Collège des Bons-Enfants since the day before yesterday, and I intend to go to Saint-Lazare today to spend the night, God willing.

Enclosed is a letter from Mademoiselle Poulaillon which I just received this minute. What do you think of her suggestion, Mademoiselle?

I have not heard anything at all about that matter of which you are aware. I shall soon have the happiness of seeing that individual's confessor.

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<sup>4</sup>A Daughter of Charity.

<sup>5</sup>Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, a parish in Paris.

**Letter 314.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter seems to belong near no. 313.

I find your son a little pale — that sore hand is somewhat painful. He promised M. Pavillon that he would work on the resolution he is supposed to take. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Monday, at ten o'clock, at the Collège des Bons-Enfants

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

315. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 277a.)

316. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, IN RICHELIEU

Paris, March 15, 1638

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter of the fourth of this month yesterday, but I have not yet received the one from the King's advocate in Loudun. I am very glad that you are furnishing your house little by little. It is not the time to talk about hurrying the church. I shall not lose the opportunity to do so, because I am very sorry to see you suffering<sup>1</sup> in that little place.

May God be blessed for the success of your mission and that of Messieurs Buissot and Durot! Oh! how useful the success of the latter ought to be for some of us!

I am a little worried about M. Gourrant's illness and that of

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**Letter 316.** - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>First wording: "sorry to see suffering those of whom we . . . ." Saint Vincent crossed out the last four words and added "you" between the lines, before "suffering."

Bastien.<sup>2</sup> Although I have perfect confidence in your care, in the name of Our Lord, Monsieur, allow me to recommend them to you.

As for what you say about M. Codoing's making a big point of explaining the sixth commandment, I beg you, Monsieur, to tell him that I ask him most humbly not to speak about it any more, in Richelieu or anywhere else, except in a very moderate way,<sup>3</sup> for several reasons I shall enumerate for him, which are of the greatest importance.<sup>4</sup>

I am going to Rueil and shall have someone speak to His Eminence<sup>5</sup> about the Charity,<sup>6</sup> so that he may decide whether he would like to establish it while the people are well disposed. Let me know, meanwhile,<sup>7</sup> how many sick people there are in Richelieu<sup>8</sup> ordinarily — I do not mean in August, but now.<sup>9</sup>

I see that you have met our little Brother Nicolas<sup>10</sup> and received my letter. He is the nephew of M. de la Quin (?) and is presenting a very fine young man from Poitou to be a brother here. He is going to see his mother whose health is in danger and, when that is done, he will come and pay you a visit.

Once again, please give the Company to understand from me that they must be extremely prudent about the explanation and any questions concerning the sixth commandment, and must not dress the children up for the procession in any way whatsoever, not even in surplices, except for those who usually wear them. We are in trouble because of those things and it will be a long time before

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<sup>2</sup>Sébastien Nodo, a coadjutor brother, born about 1603 in the diocese of Rouen. He was received into the Congregation of the Mission in 1633.

<sup>3</sup>The words "or anywhere else, except in a very moderate way" are written between the lines.

<sup>4</sup>The words meaning "the greatest" are written between the lines.

<sup>5</sup>Cardinal Richelieu.

<sup>6</sup>The words "about the Charity" are written between the lines.

<sup>7</sup>A word added between the lines.

<sup>8</sup>A word added between the lines.

<sup>9</sup>Here the Saint had added the words "In accordance with that, we . . .," which he then crossed out.

<sup>10</sup>Nicolas Corman, a coadjutor brother.



we come to the end of it. Blessed be God that there was no complaint about the mission<sup>11</sup> that recently gave rise to people's<sup>12</sup> talking about us!

What you see so scratched out, I wrote to you last night when I was half asleep. Pray to God and have others pray for the Company.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Monsieur Lambert, Priest of the Mission, in Richelieu

317. - TO JEAN BECU, IN SAINT-VICTOR

[February or March 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

So you are about to depart. We are longing to see you again in good health. Meanwhile, please find out from the Pastor of Saint-Victor<sup>2</sup> (if you judge him to be of good character and sufficient ability), whether he intends to become a religious of the Order of Malta, as the statutes require of those who have their parishes. If you find him uncertain, give him to understand that this is the Commander's<sup>3</sup> wish and that it must be carried out.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, let him reflect on the matter and inform him of his final decision within a month because, if he does not want to do it, the Com-

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<sup>11</sup>The mission in Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

<sup>12</sup>The first wording read: "everyone's."

**Letter 317.** - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>An unknown hand wrote near the address: "in Lent, 1638."

<sup>2</sup>Saint-Victor-de-Buthon (Eure-et-Loir).

<sup>3</sup>Commander de Sillery.

<sup>4</sup>These words were added between the lines.

mander is determined to follow the statute of the Order and give the parish to someone else. And if he wants to do it, the said Commander would like to see him and have him understand his desire concerning some preparation he wants him to make before beginning the novitiate. Please tell him this gently and prudently, and convey his intent to the Commander. Also, please go on to Champagne,<sup>5</sup> near Houdan,<sup>6</sup> and find out from some of the people how they feel about the priest the Commander sent them a little while ago. But if you must take the coach to Dreux, then do so; the Commander will get this information elsewhere. I send greetings to the Pastor of Saint-Victor and to M. Cuissot, and I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Monsieur Bécu, Priest of the Mission, in Saint-Victor.

**318. - TO LEONARD BOUCHER, IN MONTMIRAIL**

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Last Sunday, as I was leaving for the city and from there for the country, I received your letter of the tenth of this month. As I returned the evening before last somewhat exhausted, my mind was not functioning well enough to take care of sending someone to assist good M. Mouton. I am doing so this morning and send-

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<sup>5</sup>A little place in Eure-et-Loir.

<sup>6</sup>Principal town of a canton in Yvelines.

ing you Mathieu,<sup>1</sup> who is filled with zeal and charity, as you know. I beg you, Monsieur, not to spare anything for him. There are apothecaries in Montmirail and good surgeons. As for the doctor, you must send to Château-Thierry for one. There is one named M. Fournier, who is a good doctor and a friend of ours. You can use his services if you have not already called in someone else. And because he would be more comfortable in Montmirail, please have him taken there. I am writing to M. Octobre, the concierge, to have him find an apartment for him. I entreat you, Monsieur, not to leave him unless he is better, in which case you can complete the mission you have begun or join M. Lucas while M. Mouton is resting.

I most humbly greet the said M. Mouton and embrace him in spirit with a heart full of sorrow and tenderness. We shall not fail to pray to God for him, as you may suppose.

I am not going to say anything to you about the rest of your letter concerning the Charities, except that I can see quite well that this is not the time to reestablish them. Our Lord will give us a more opportune and peaceful moment, if He wishes.

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

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, March 17, 1638

*Addressed:* Monsieur Boucher, Priest of the Mission, in Montmirail

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<sup>1</sup>Brother Mathieu Régnard was born in Brienne-le-Château, now Brienne-Napoléon (Aube), July 26, 1592. He entered the Congregation of the Mission in October 1631, pronounced vows October 28, 1644, and died October 5, 1669. He was the principal distributor of Saint Vincent's alms in Lorraine and during the troubles of the Fronde. He was a great help to the Saint because of his daring, composure, and savoir faire. His biography is in vol. II of the *Notices*, pp. 29-33.

319. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[March 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Enclosed is a letter from Barbe.<sup>2</sup> I did not send her the one you wrote to her until this morning. I kept forgetting it when I wrote to Saint-Germain.<sup>3</sup>

But how are you, Mademoiselle? I have been told that you are better. I praise God for that and ask Him to restore as much of your strength as you need to go to the country this spring.

Last night I visited Madame Goussault, the President's wife. I had not seen her at all since the beginning of her illness ten days ago. She is better and wants to see good weather again and a little more strength so that she may go for a ride in the country. She did not have the fever she was expecting yesterday.

Our Brother Alexandre<sup>4</sup> is coming to see you today.

How are your little children? A word about them, please; not in writing, do not go to that trouble, but just by word of mouth.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

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**Letter 319.** - Autograph letter. In 1901 the original was given to Cardinal Langénieux, Archbishop of Reims, by M. Antoine Fiat, Superior General of the Priests of the Congregation of the Mission.

<sup>1</sup>The presence of Barbe Angiboust in Saint-Germain-en-Laye leaves no doubt as to the year. On the other hand, the letter is anterior to no. 320.

<sup>2</sup>Barbe Angiboust.

<sup>3</sup>Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

<sup>4</sup>Alexandre Véronne, infirmarian at Saint-Lazare.

320. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, IN RICHELIEU

Paris, March 22, 1638

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

These few lines are to tell you two things: first, that young man from Poitou asked to join the Company after a trip he is making home to see his good mother. If you need him, it does not matter to him whether he is with you or here.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, make use of him as you wish.

The second thing is to let you know that the Cardinal has instructed me to tell you to set up the Charity in Richelieu. He will give it something annually until it can support itself by means of ordinary collections. According to that, while waiting, it would be appropriate for you to give it eight or ten écus immediately, if you can.

The King's advocate in Loudun told me that the Mission's method with regard to heretics is excellent, in that it establishes the divine truths without arguing controversial points. The Huguenots are delighted with this. Therefore, please continue.

The Cardinal is of the opinion that a day of rest should be taken each week during the mission, Saturday, for example. He ordered me to see that this is done everywhere. I am asking you, Monsieur, to begin in Richelieu.<sup>2</sup>

I shall send you the Daughter of Charity.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps Madame Goussault will bring her to you as soon as possible after Easter.

The hurry I am in does not allow me to tell you any more, except that I shall answer those who wrote to us by the first

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Letter 320. - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>See no. 316.

<sup>2</sup>Lambert aux Couteaux wrote to Cardinal Richelieu on April 16, 1638, to give him an account of the good results of the mission. His letter is in the Arch. du ministère des Aff. Etrang., France, Mémoires et Documents, 830, f<sup>o</sup> 105.

<sup>3</sup>Barbe Angiboust. The departure of the Sister was delayed until October.

messenger. I embrace them all, meanwhile, and I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Monsieur Lambert, Priest of the Mission, in Richelieu

321. - TO THE DUC D'ATRI<sup>1</sup>

[Around March 1638]<sup>2</sup>

Monseigneur,

The Comte de Bourlemont<sup>3</sup> and his son, the abbé,<sup>4</sup> have done me the honor of telling me that Your Lordship would like me to give you an account of the condition of Mademoiselle d'Atri, your daughter,<sup>5</sup> so that Your Lordship may determine what will be best for her. I promised them that I would do so, all the more willingly, Monseigneur, because I am indebted to a special blessing from God for the opportunity to serve Your Lordship.

Three or four months ago, I received an order from the eccle-

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**Letter 321.** - Reg. 1, f<sup>o</sup> 7 v<sup>o</sup>. The copyist took his text from the rough draft written in Saint Vincent's hand.

<sup>1</sup>Scipio d'Acquaviva d'Aragon, Duc d'Atri, husband of Geneviève Doni d'Attichy, who was, through her mother, Valence de Marillac, first cousin of Saint Louise. To punish him for having served France, the Spanish government deprived him of all his possessions, which passed into the hands of his children. His son, Joseph-François, died in 1643, without leaving any heirs. One of his two daughters, Marie, entered the Carmelites. The other, Marie-Angélique, is the girl in question here.

<sup>2</sup>Internal evidence, substantiated by dated correspondence of Mother Marie-Angélique Arnauld, permits us to assign this date.

<sup>3</sup>Claude d'Anglure, Prince d'Amblyse, Marquis de Sy, Comte de Bourlemont, Vicomte de Forest and Baron de Busancy. He had married Angélique Diacette, daughter of Anne d'Acquaviva d'Aragon, Duchesse d'Atri.

<sup>4</sup>Charles-François d'Anglure, abbé de la Crête, de Béchamp, and de Saint-Pierremont, died on December 25, 1669. He occupied successively the episcopal Sees of Aire, Castres, and Toulouse. One of his brothers, Louis, who played some role in the diplomatic service, became Bishop of Fréjus and Archbishop of Bordeaux.

<sup>5</sup>Marie-Angélique d'Atri.

siastical judge in Paris to visit your daughter. The Comte de Maure<sup>6</sup> had asked permission to have her exorcised, according to the advice given him by several persons of deep piety. They feared that the good child was being tormented by some evil possession or obsession. The reason they had for believing this was the aversion the good child had for the things of God. It had reached such a point that she had not prayed at all for three years, from the time of her childhood when she was living in Ville-l'Evêque<sup>7</sup> with Mademoiselle de Longueville,<sup>8</sup> and for about two years she had been kept locked up in a room at Port-Royal<sup>9</sup> without hearing Holy Mass. Therefore, that was why those good souls held that opinion and the reason why I had the happiness of visiting her. She immediately expressed her state to me with good judgment and candor, for she has a good, solid mind, far beyond that of the majority of young women, but a little melancholic. It was my opinion at once that it was just that melancholy depression tormenting her. Nevertheless, the respect I owed to those who held the opinion that there was some evil obsession caused me to submit my judgment to theirs. Therefore, when I was making my

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<sup>6</sup>Louis de Rochechouart, Comte de Maure, is known particularly for his opposition to Mazarin's politics. When everyone was trembling before the powerful minister, he came to Court on March 20, 1649, and gave a speech before the entire Council, requesting his expulsion. He fought in the Princes' party until the day when, wounded in the head and arm during a battle fought in Libourne in 1652, he was captured and held prisoner by the King's men. He died on his estate of Essai, near Alençon, on November 9, 1669, at the age of sixty-seven, leaving no heirs. (Cf. Général-Comte de Rochechouart, *Histoire de la maison de Rochechouart* [2 vols., Paris: E. Allard, 1859], vol. II, pp. 81-88.)

<sup>7</sup>In the parish of Sainte-Madeleine de la Ville-l'Evêque, in Paris.

<sup>8</sup>Marie d'Orléans was born March 5, 1625, of Henri d'Orléans II and Louise de Bourbon. She was married May 22, 1657, to Henri de Savoie II, Duc de Nemours, and widowed January 14, 1659. After the death of her brothers, she inherited all the possessions of her family. She died June 16, 1707, leaving no children. She was, said Saint Simon (cf. *Mémoires* [26 vols., Paris: ed. de Boislisle, 1879-1914], vol. II, p. 225), a "very tall, extraordinary woman of great wit, who stayed very much at home in the Hôtel de Soissons, where she did not keep very good company; she was immensely rich and lived in great splendor."

<sup>9</sup>The fact of this sequestration is so strange, that one might wonder whether the copyist of Reg. I read the text correctly. Should it not read: "she had remained" instead of "she was kept"? It might be that Mademoiselle d'Atri gave herself up to irreligious eccentricities during Mass. Given this hypothesis, there would be no reason to consider the text incorrect.

report to the ecclesiastical judge, I told him that I thought there was no objection to M. Charpentier's — he is a priest of renowned holiness in this city<sup>10</sup> — performing a few cautious exorcisms, gently and without calling the evil spirit out, by prayer rather than by cursing. Such was the advice of the Reverend Father General of the Oratory.<sup>11</sup> It was not carried out because of the said *Sieur Charpentier's* illness. In the meantime, God chose to send your daughter a rather serious and dangerous illness, during which she opened her heart. The *Comte*<sup>12</sup> and *Comtesse de Maure*,<sup>13</sup> fearing for her salvation, persuaded her to go to confession to me. She did this by a general confession of her entire past life, with the greatest exactitude that I have ever seen; she spent three or four hours confessing on separate occasions. It was this action that confirmed the opinion I had beforehand. Since the illness had been a little drawn out and was some sort of languor, I thought she had gone back into the torment of the same depression. Now since she was cured, nonetheless, she found herself completely freed from it so that she asked to go to confession to me again and to receive Holy Communion which she had not done during her illness. She performed these actions with freedom of spirit as any other person would have done.

Some time later, she asked to be a religious and to be received at Port-Royal. As soon as she told me about it, I replied that it was not the time. She needed at least a year with her aunt,<sup>14</sup> who should take her to get some country air before she thought of carrying out that plan. I told her the same thing as often as she and the *Comte* and *Comtesse de Maure* did me the honor of speaking

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<sup>10</sup>Hubert Charpentier, graduate in theology of the Sorbonne, was born at Coulommiers on November 3, 1565. After contributing to the foundation of Notre-Dame de Garaison, he founded two establishments to honor the Cross of the Savior: one at Bétharram, the other at Mont-Valérien, near Paris. He died in Paris on December 10, 1650.

<sup>11</sup>Charles de Condren.

<sup>12</sup>The text of the original manuscript bore the words: ". . . and the care of M." Coste omitted this phrase because the resulting construction would have made no sense.

<sup>13</sup>Louis de Rochecouart and Anne Doni d'Attichy.

<sup>14</sup>The *Comtesse de Maure*.



to me about it. However, that did not prevent her from secretly proceeding with her entrance into religious life or from putting forward a number of reasons, some based on the judgments of God and some on the fact that she could not stand the world's manner of acting.

When the Messieurs de Bourlemont learned of this and informed the Comte and Comtesse de Maure that it was Your Lordship's wish that she enter religious life, after some objection on the part of both, they agreed to it, although with great reluctance, fearing lest the good child go back into the same depression. After I had represented to the said Sieurs de Bourlemont the danger in which the good young woman was being placed, they passed over all the aforesaid objections, judging that such was your desire, and they placed her, not at Port-Royal, but in a monastery of the Jacobines.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Dominicans. Although she speaks more than once in her letters about the so-called possession and cure of Mademoiselle d'Atri, Mother Angélique Arnauld passes over Saint Vincent's intervention in silence. She wrote to M. Macquet on June 29, 1637 (*Lettres de la Révérende Mère Marie-Angélique Arnauld, abbesse et réformatrice de Port-Royal* [3 vols., Utrecht: n. p., 1742-1744], vol. I, p. 106): "Do not forget the young woman about whom I spoke to you, who is still in the miserable state in which she was." She made the same recommendation to Saint Jane Frances on November 9: "I most humbly entreat you to pray to God for the deliverance of a poor young woman who is possessed." (Communication of M. Gazier.) "It is the most pitiful situation in the world," she again wrote to Saint Jane Frances on December 22, and asked her for some relics of Saint Francis de Sales to drive out the devil. (*Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 132.) The cure came soon afterwards since Mother Angélique was able to add on February 17, 1638: "The young lady whom I recommended so urgently to you . . . was set free two hours after she placed around her neck the wooden image of the Blessed Virgin that the good Mother gave us." The dispositions of Mademoiselle d'Atri changed so much that she felt attracted to the religious life and would have followed her inclination, were it not for the opposition of her family. (*Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 136.) A month later, Mother Angélique recommended the greatest discretion to M. Macquet concerning this marvelous conversion: "I implore you, in the name of God, that there be no talk about this miracle of the Blessed Virgin, of which you are aware. That is the tendency of the Sisters, and it is the style to want to honor God, His holy Mother, and the saints only through miracles and discourses. . . . I was wrong to have told you about it, and I see clearly that it was not through the spirit of God, because instead of inspiring the Sisters with a renewed, unassuming, and interior trust in the Blessed Virgin, all it has done is create a stir. I am certain that not one of them prayed to her afterwards to be freed of her imperfections. It is far better for them never to speak at all than to talk even about miracles that way; the Blessed Virgin prefers their silence." (*Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 138.) How can Mother Angélique's report be reconciled with that of Saint Vincent? It would seem that there were two cures,

That, Monseigneur, is what has happened in this affair. The Messieurs de Bourlemont thought it fitting for me to write to Your Lordship about it. It will be up to you, Monseigneur, to decide now what would be best with regard to the good young woman's direction. It is difficult for me to speak to you about this matter, but I thought I was obliged to do so in conscience and that you would not be offended since your daughter's salvation is in danger. If God were pleased to make me worthy of rendering you some more agreeable service, His Divine Goodness knows that I have a great desire to do so and that there is no one in the world over whom Our Lord has given you more power than over me. I am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

322. - TO ANTOINE PORTAIL, IN FRENEVILLE

Paris, April 28, 1638

. . . Well now, Monsieur, that is a great deal with regard to temporal matters. May it please the goodness of God that, according to your desire, they may not divert you from spiritual ones. May He share with us the eternal thought He has of Himself while continuously giving His full attention to the direction of the world and to providing for the needs of all His creatures, even down to a tiny gnat! O Monsieur, how we must work at acquiring a share in that spirit!

I am, in the same spirit, Monsieur. . . .

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one of which did not last; but it would be difficult to say which was the first. Could not Mother Angélique's wish, expressed in her letter of March 1638, have been occasioned by a relapse? Whatever the case, the cure was permanent. Later, in a letter of October 22, Mother Angélique reminded Mademoiselle d'Atri of the grace she had received.

**Letter 322.** - Files of Turin, copy made by Antoine Portail.

322a. - TO FRANCOIS DUFESTEL,<sup>1</sup> IN SANCEY<sup>2</sup>

Saint-Lazare, May 8, 1638

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter of May 3 and understand from it: (1) the difficulty of continuing the mission to the soldiers; (2) the rumor going around concerning Saint-Lazare; (3) that fault is being found because no one wrote to anyone in the city to recommend the Company.

Now I shall tell you with regard to the first, that the unsettled state of the poor people would probably hinder them from reaping any benefit from the mission. We must patiently await the time of the ordinands in order to give the retreat there, if the Bishop of Troyes<sup>3</sup> approves. If not, it would be well to go and give the mission in the other places belonging to the Commander.<sup>4</sup> If indeed you do work with the ordinands, I shall send you M. Baudet,<sup>5</sup> whom I have purposely detained here for that work, but you must notify me ahead of time.

As for the rumor going around about Saint-Lazare, what shall we do about it? We must put up with such rumors patiently. Our Lord will bring about their disappearance since they have no foundation.

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**Letter 322a.** - Autograph letter. The original is in the house of the Sisters of Charity of Besançon, 131 Grande Rue, Besançon. A photocopy of the original has been placed in the Archives of the Mission, (Paris). The text was published in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, pp. 15-17.

<sup>1</sup>François Dufestel, born in Oisemont (Somme), entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1633 and was ordained a priest in September 1636. He was Superior in Troyes (1638-1642), Annecy (1642), Cahors (1643-1644), and Marseilles (1644-1645). He left the Congregation in 1646 to become Dean of Saint-Omer de Lillers (Pas-de-Calais).

<sup>2</sup>Locality situated near Troyes, now called Saint-Julien; it was a temporary place of residence for the Missionaries in Troyes.

<sup>3</sup>René de Breslay.

<sup>4</sup>Commander de Sillery.

<sup>5</sup>Probably Jacques Boudet.

I wrote to tell you how the Commander and Father de Gondi feel about the third point. It is better to be at fault with the advice of those two good men than to take the matter upon ourselves. I shall talk to them about it again and shall send them your letter.

It would be well for you to notify me of all that has to do with us and to do so by every messenger. Please write to the Bishop of Troyes concerning the ordinands, not as though you are questioning the matter, but to find out from him if there will be many ordinands.

Since the young man he sent us has no desire at all to be a member of the Company, and because it is to be feared that there might be some danger of his causing dissatisfaction on the part of the other students, all of whom wish to join the Company, we decided to place him at the Collège du Cardinal.<sup>6</sup> We shall willingly pay his board there and hear his lessons sometimes, so that it will be as though he were with us, there being only a wall between that collège and ours. Please inform the Bishop of Troyes of this, Monsieur. Tell him also that we shall take special care of him and shall see to the payment of his board without there being need for him to pay anything else. It will be sufficient that he be provided with clothing.

I am to leave this morning for Brie-Comte-Robert.<sup>7</sup> From there I shall be able to go and pay a visit in Fréneville,<sup>8</sup> so that I can be back on the eve of the Ascension.

I send heartfelt greetings to MM. du Chesne, Savary, and our

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<sup>6</sup>Collège du Cardinal Lemoine, separated from the Collège des Bons-Enfants by a joint wall.

<sup>7</sup>Locality in Seine-et-Marne, thirty kilometers from Paris, where the Missionaries and Saint Vincent himself preached. The Commander de Sillery founded a mission there which was to be given every five years.

<sup>8</sup>Hamlet in the commune of Valpuiseaux (Essonne). The Congregation of the Mission had a farm there, where on several occasions Saint Vincent spent more or less prolonged periods of time.

Brother René,<sup>9</sup> and I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Monsieur Dufestel, Priest of the Mission, in Sancey

323. - TO JEAN BECU, IN MARCHAIS<sup>1</sup>

[May 20 or 21, 1638]<sup>2</sup>

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Since you are having so much difficulty in the country, I entreat you, Monsieur, to go and give the mission in Montmirail. You will have to give the morning sermon. M. Abeline,<sup>3</sup> who is with the

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<sup>9</sup>Pierre du Chesne, Pierre Savary, and an unidentified coadjutor brother of the Congregation of the Mission named René. Pierre Savary, Priest of the Mission, was born in 1606 in Neuville-Vitasse (diocese of Arras). He entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1637 and was stationed at the Seminary of Troyes.

**Letter 323.** - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>A small locality in Aisne.

<sup>2</sup>On the side reserved for the address the following words are written: "Tuesday or Wednesday before Pentecost, May 1638."

<sup>3</sup>Better known as Abelly. Louis Abelly was born in Paris in 1604. From the earliest years of his priesthood he took part in Saint Vincent's apostolic labors. The Saint recognized his worth and spoke so highly of him to François Fouquet, Bishop-elect of Bayonne, that he appointed him his Vicar General. His stay in Bayonne was not long. He accepted a simple village parish near Paris and shortly afterwards (1644) was given charge of Saint-Josse, a parish in the capital, where he formed an ecclesiastical community. He later became director of the Sisters of the Cross (1650), chaplain of the general hospital (1657), and Bishop of Rodez (1662). In 1666 he resigned from his See for reasons of health and retired to Saint-Lazare, where he spent the last twenty-five years of his life in recollection and study. We have almost thirty of his books of devotion, history, and theology. The best known are *Sacerdos christianus* (Paris, 1656); *Medulla theologica* (2 vols., Paris, 1652-1653), which earned for him from the author of the *Lutrin* the nickname "Moelleux" [from the French for *medulla* - *moelle*]; and above all, *La Vie du Vénérable Vincent de Paul*. He is not merely the sponsor of this work, as has been asserted, but is truly its author. His task was greatly facilitated by Brother Ducournau, who collected and classified the documents. He made a donation to the house of Saint-Lazare of some property he owned in Pantin, which became the country house of the students. Abelly

Bishop of Bayonne,<sup>4</sup> will teach the adult catechism, and M. Le Breton,<sup>5</sup> who is also with him, will perhaps teach the children's. He has never been on a mission, but he is learned, quite devout, and has very good sense nonetheless, which makes us think that he will do well. I shall discuss it with him. If he does not do it, then M. Boucher or M. Cuissot will. Inform M. Lucas of this. They can leave tomorrow in order to be in Montmirail by Saturday. It would be well for you to go and arrange some accommodations. I am writing a note about this to M. Octobre, the concierge.<sup>6</sup> If it is necessary at times, you can have M. Lucas help you with the morning sermon. If the Bishop of Soissons<sup>7</sup> sends someone for the octave of the Blessed Sacrament, take a rest. You will have to attend to the arrangements to be made and call a meeting of the Ladies of Charity. I shall send you a brother to serve in Montmirail—Gallemant<sup>8</sup> or someone else—but you will have to give some attention to the food.

I most humbly send greetings to the Company. M. Abeline is a very good man, very prudent and discreet, and M. Le Breton, very fervent. I entreat the Company, for the love of Jesus Christ, to give them good example and show them great charity and respect. One of them is soon to be the Vicar General of Bayonne. In the name of God, Monsieur, may they leave the Company edified. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Please be sure to give the postage fee for the letters to M. Octobre and to arrive in Montmirail early on Saturday so that you

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died October 4, 1691, and was buried, according to his wish, in the church of Saint-Lazare, under the Saints-Anges chapel. (Cf. Collet, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 5 ff.)

<sup>4</sup>François Fouquet.

<sup>5</sup>A priest of the Tuesday Conferences.

<sup>6</sup>Of the Château de Montmirail.

<sup>7</sup>Simon Le Gras (1624-1656).

<sup>8</sup>Jean Gallemant, a coadjutor brother, was born in 1608 in Conteville (Seine-Maritime) and was received into the Congregation of the Mission on April 3, 1638.

can have the accommodations arranged and welcome M. Abeline and M. Le Breton.

*Addressed:* Monsieur Bécu, Priest of the Mission, presently in Marchais

324. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around May 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The proposal you made about Madame de Herse seemed complicated to me at first. Nevertheless, we shall have to look into it.

I am going to the city and hope to see you in La Chapelle tomorrow. However, if the carriage is going to pick you up, please do not fail to go, and arrange things at your house as you think best.

I praise God for what you told me about Madame Turgis and beg Him to increase His grace in her.

I do not understand what you told me about Isabelle<sup>2</sup> and Barbe;<sup>3</sup> explain it to me. There was one word I was not able to read concerning the matter.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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**Letter 324.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter seems to belong with no. 325.

<sup>2</sup>Elisabeth Martin.

<sup>3</sup>Barbe Angiboust.

325. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[May 24, 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You will see before God, I hope, that you did the right thing in sending away that good young woman. You will do well to be satisfied with the payment of two hundred livres for her board and to allow Isabelle<sup>2</sup> to go to Argenteuil.

My little fever will not permit me to speak to your Sisters this week.

Enclosed is a note with a gift of the Holy Spirit, sent to you from Sainte-Marie.<sup>3</sup>

In the name of God, Mademoiselle, take care of your health. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your servant.

V. DEPAUL

Monday

You can send Barbe to Saint-Germain<sup>4</sup> whenever you wish. Mademoiselle de Chaumont feels that she is necessary there and Madame Goussault does not think there is any need to send her to Richelieu. But without asking for it, however, she would like us to be able to send three to the hospital in Angers.<sup>5</sup> I sent her word that we would talk about it when she comes back.

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**Letter 325.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The return of Sister Barbe Angiboust to Saint-Germain-en-Laye could have taken place only in 1638. Reference to the Holy Spirit and the mention of Monday after the signature prompt us to believe that this letter was written on Pentecost Monday, thus enabling us to assign the month and day.

<sup>2</sup>Elisabeth Martin. She was a native of Argenteuil (Val d'Oise).

<sup>3</sup>Visitation Convent.

<sup>4</sup>Saint Vincent had recently recalled Barbe Angiboust from Saint-Germain-en-Laye to send her to Richelieu, where she did not go until later. (Cf. no. 320.)

<sup>5</sup>Saint-Jean Hospital in Angers. The Daughters of Charity went there at the end of the year.



The officers of the Hôtel-Dieu Ladies are coming here to the house tomorrow. See if you have any advice to give me.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras.

326. - TO JEAN BECU, IN MONTMIRAIL

Paris, June 2 [1638]<sup>1</sup>

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Blessed be God for all that you wrote to me! I shall inquire about a schoolteacher, if there are none to be found there and if you let me know what her salary will amount to. It is very dangerous for girls and boys to go to school together.

The direction of the Charity belongs to the Prior.<sup>2</sup> If there are any funds, there will be no harm in using them to have the chapel set up.

I am a little suspicious about that poor woman's fondness for arranging her hair. You must try to make her change. If she is unwilling to do so, *in nomine Domini*. What you are suggesting to her seems reasonable to me.

I wrote to the Bishop of Soissons<sup>3</sup> about the two gentlemen, Abeline and Breton.

It would be well to have some restitution made or an alms given for the release of that prisoner.

Please tell M. Cuissot that his good brother has come to see me several times and that he is living and working with a goldsmith.

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**Letter 326.** - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written in the same year as nos. 323 and 329, both of which bear exact dates.

<sup>2</sup>Jean-François Delabarre, born in Château-Thierry, named Prior of Montmirail in 1636. He resigned from his parish in 1646 and died in 1647.

<sup>3</sup>Simon Le Gras.

Tell him also that I have forgotten his name and do not know how to send him the letter he intends to write to him. He seems good-natured to me.

We had sixty ordinands or thereabouts. They did very well, thank God. The Archbishop<sup>4</sup> came to see them and went away quite satisfied, thank God; and with good reason, by the mercy of God.

M. Mouton no longer has a fever. Everyone is well. Only good M. Fouquet, the father,<sup>5</sup> is worse and in critical condition. Please pray and have others pray to God for him. He is one of the most upright men I know. I am, for M. Abeline and M. Le Breton and for the entire Company, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Monsieur Bécu, Priest of the Mission, in Montmirail

327. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1638 or 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

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<sup>4</sup>Jean-François de Gondi.

<sup>5</sup>François Fouquet, Vicomte de Vaux, was born in Brittany in 1587 and died in Paris on April 22, 1640. He was a shipowner when Richelieu called him to the Council of the Navy and Commerce. He became a Counselor in the Parlement, Master of Requests, and Ambassador to Switzerland. He had twelve children by his wife, Marie de Maupeou. Five daughters entered the Visitation; Nicolas, the most famous of his children, was Superintendent of Finances; François occupied the Episcopal Sees of Bayonne, Agde, and Narbonne; and Louis took his brother's place as Bishop of Agde.

**Letter 327.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written after the work of the Foundlings had begun (January 1638) and before Madame Goussault's last illness (July 1639).

I shall try to go and serve<sup>2</sup> that good young woman Saturday at the usual time.

I am stunned by the death of so many of those little creatures; I think there may be something to what you say. Please let me know what Madame de Herse told you about it. We shall really have to think seriously about what we should do in this situation.

I already wrote to Madame Goussault, I believe, that I was praising God for letting her think of inviting you to go to Grigny. I say the same thing to you. You will find there M. Pavillon and two priests from the house here; one of them has just left the seminary and the other is still in it. There is also a nephew of the Pastor of Saint-Gervais,<sup>3</sup> who lives at Saint-Nicolas.<sup>4</sup> I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

Thursday, at four o'clock

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras.

### 328. - TO NICOLAS MARCEILLE<sup>1</sup>

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I thank you most humbly for taking care to send us so promptly all that I asked of you in my last letter and I entreat you, in the name of Our Lord, to take care of your health. M. de la Salle

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<sup>2</sup>Hear her confession.

<sup>3</sup>A parish in Paris. The Pastor of Saint-Gervais was at that time Charles-François Talon, Doctor of the Sorbonne, former Advocate General in the Parlement of Paris.

<sup>4</sup>The seminary of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.

**Letter 328.** - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Nicolas Marceille, Priest of the Mission, born in Pont-Sainte-Maxence, was received into the Congregation of the Mission in 1635. He was Procurator of the house of Saint-Lazare.

wrote me that you seemed a little unwell. I beseech you, Monsieur, to get some rest and have yourself purged and bled.

I shall be upset if you did not allow the Prior<sup>2</sup> to have his say in the lease executed for the farmer from Le Bourget.<sup>3</sup>

You must not have the hay cut while this rainy weather lasts, no matter what the workers tell you. It would be well to write to Bertrand Denise in Villepreux for me and ask him to send you that good man he sent to Saint-Lazare to toss and separate the hay. Send him here, giving him some money for that purpose. Jourdain<sup>4</sup> knows where the people in Villepreux live and will be able to send the letter with a trustworthy person. The owner of the meadow opposite the church in La Chapelle knows how to take care of it. When you find out that he is having his own cut, you can have ours cut, and not any sooner. Bertrand Denise is Father de Gondi's farmer on his Villepreux farm. It would be well for you to contract by the day with the good man he sends you and send him here to us.

My little illness is still with me; nonetheless, I think I glimpse some slight improvement. I intend, with God's help, to be purged, unless something absolutely requires my return.

Well now, I close, recommending myself to your prayers and in spirit to that good and holy man, your father. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. DEPAUL

Fréneville, octave day of the Blessed Sacrament<sup>5</sup>

If you need little Pasquier, you may keep him; we shall do

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<sup>2</sup>Adrien Le Bon.

<sup>3</sup>A locality near Saint-Denis in Seine-Saint-Denis. There was some property there that had belonged to the priory of Saint-Lazare since the twelfth century. (Arch. Nat. S 6651.)

<sup>4</sup>Jean Jourdain, a coadjutor brother.

<sup>5</sup>An unknown hand wrote near these words: June 17, 1638. The person who wrote that date did not realize that in 1638 the octave day of the Blessed Sacrament fell on June 10 and not June 17. In June 1638 Saint Vincent was in Fréneville, and ill, which leads us to conclude that the year and the month are correct.

without him here. Pierre is doing what he used to do. Please have M. Boudet bled and purged, unless he has had it done since his return. I send him my humble greetings. Please send our Brother Louistre's<sup>6</sup> letters to the place they are addressed in the direction of Mantes on Saturday morning. The messenger leaves Paris that day.

*Addressed:* Monsieur de Marceille, Priest of the Mission, at Saint-Lazare

329. - TO JEAN BECU, IN MONTMIRAIL

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Last night, in Fréneville, I received the letter you wrote me on the fifth of this month. I am rather worried about your little indisposition and am asking Our Lord to restore you to complete health.

You would do well to give twenty sous to the vergers and half an écu to the gardener.

You can do only what you have done, which was to send those two adulterers away secretly, unless one of them comes back. In that case, it would be wise to do what you can to persuade them to separate. The woman will perhaps be more disposed to do so.

The matter of the schoolteacher is to be handled by Father de Gondi,<sup>1</sup> since he is right there. He will also handle the reimbursement of the Charity's funds.

I do not doubt that the mission is moving slowly, with the present confusion of minds due to the way things are nowadays.

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<sup>6</sup>Robert Louistre who entered the Congregation of the Mission as a coadjutor brother in 1637 (*Notices*, vol. V, p. 394). There is no other information about him.

**Letter 329.** - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The landowner of the locality.

The division with the Prior<sup>2</sup> is probably a contributing factor as well. You must not take sides in the matter; only neutral people can reconcile minds.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament during octaves is not customary everywhere. When in Rome, you must do as the Romans do and accept the local customs, if they are not immoral.

The notary, who wrote as the parties directed him to do, did his duty by warning them before writing and, although he was aware of the contrary, he was, nevertheless, obliged to believe the contracting parties. He is there as a judge who must give more credence to what the parties prove to him than to what he has seen to the contrary. So much for the first case.

As for the second, I doubt that the person who bought the meadow, with the possibility of its being repurchased within three years, is in good faith, because it was not sold for a fair price. There is a loss of about sixty livres. The man would do well to release the seller from the obligation of the clause stating that it cannot be bought back after three years, or else give him sixty livres over and above the hundred for an unconditional sale. That way he will be buying the meadow at five percent, which is the fair price for a commoner's property. Also, that type of contract, which carries the obligation of the clause above, is contrary to good morals when the just price is not given.

There you have, Monsieur, what I can tell you from Fréneville, where I am with my little fever by Alexandre's<sup>3</sup> order. Many people here are asking about you. Brother Hubert<sup>4</sup> is doing incomparably well. Madame de la Grange is critically ill; she is hemorrhaging from the lung. She will be a great loss to this parish. I recommend her to your prayers and send most humble greetings to

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<sup>2</sup>Jean-François Delabarre.

<sup>3</sup>First name of Brother Véronne, infirmarian of Saint-Lazare.

<sup>4</sup>Hubert Bécu, Jean Bécu's brother, was born in Braches (Somme) around 1607, entered the Congregation of the Mission in July 1629 as a coadjutor brother, and was admitted to vows February 24, 1645.

M. Abeline, M. Le Breton, and the rest of the Company. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL.

Fréneville, octave day of the feast of the Blessed Sacrament,<sup>5</sup> 1638

*Addressed:* Monsieur Octobre, concierge of the Château de Montmirail, to be given, please, to Monsieur Bécu, Priest of the Mission, in Montmirail.

330. - TO JEAN DEHORGNY

[June 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am sending this messenger expressly to tell you that that good man from Osny, about one league beyond Pontoise, never arrived. I do not know whether it is his fault or the doorkeeper's. Please send someone tomorrow morning to the Courcelles<sup>2</sup> farmer to tell him that I am asking him to send me one of his sons-in-law. He can leave late that same day, spend the night at Saint-Lazare, and set out early the next morning so as to be here Tuesday evening. The season for sowing the farmer's oats is growing short. He only has fifteen more acres left to do.

Also, please send for the farmer's eldest son, the married one in La Chapelle. Find out from him how M. Bienvenu, our farmer in

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<sup>5</sup>June 10.

**Letter 330.** - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>On the side reserved for the address someone has written: Fréneville, 1638. This letter seems to belong between nos. 329 and 331.

<sup>2</sup>Courcelles did not cover a large area. Its land is included today in the commune of Levallois-Perret. (Cf. Lebeuf, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 429.)

Gonesse,<sup>3</sup> had him harrow twice at the same time the wheat-field in which the Prior<sup>4</sup> had his sainfoin sown — the one behind the barn. It seems to me that the first time the harrow was turned over on one end, and the other time through the field the harrow was not turned over but used in the usual way. I entreat you, Monsieur, to find out about this from that young man or, if he does not remember, from the said Sieur Bienvenu, and write and let me know.

I did not go on to Limouren<sup>5</sup> because, in addition to finding enough to keep me busy, I was not feeling too well the first day and neither was Jean Besson.<sup>6</sup> We signed a contract for the repairs to be made and for the garden wall for about one hundred écus. This morning we are to conclude the contract for the farmer's sheep; he wanted us to have them present.

If I can, I shall leave for Limouren soon. That place belongs entirely to God. O Monsieur, how admirable is the effect of His goodness on those people!

I doubt that I can be back in Paris before Thursday or Friday. Please send the messenger back with the man who is coming to do the sowing. Assure the latter that we shall remunerate him.

Meanwhile, I send greetings to all of you, to the Prior, and to the whole house. I am your servant.

V. DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Monsieur Dehorgny, Priest of the Mission, at Saint-Lazare

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<sup>3</sup>Principal town of a canton in Val-d'Oise.

<sup>4</sup>Adrien Le Bon.

<sup>5</sup>Limoron, a district in the commune of Villamblain (Loiret). Adrien Le Bon was titular of the Priory of Limoron.

<sup>6</sup>Jean Besson, a coadjutor brother, was born in Carisey (Yonne) on November 30, 1611, entered the Congregation of the Mission, December 8, 1635, and was admitted to vows October 21, 1646.



331. - TO JEAN DE LA SALLE

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I came back from Limouren quite late yesterday and have as yet been able to read only your letter and M. Marceille's. I am sending you that good young man from Mespuits;<sup>1</sup> I found him here because M. Portail failed to send him to you. Have him make his retreat at once, please. I am keeping little Jean until tomorrow.

By the grace of God, I am in good health since my journey. It is astonishing that, while I have been here without doing anything, I have found myself almost as I was in Paris and the great number of concerns has all but taken away my illness entirely. If I continue to be as fit as I am, I shall return around the end of the week, God willing.

Meanwhile, what can I tell you concerning the Prior?<sup>2</sup> If there is some reason for going to see him, either you or M. de Marceille should do so. However, I do not know if he spoke up at the latest leasing of Le Bourget. I was surprised by someone's telling me that I had said to have it concluded during my absence, because I think I did not make myself clearly understood. It seems to me that I had said to put off the farmer until my return, for I was well aware that there was something I had to get approved by the Prior. Doubtless M. de Marceille understood otherwise. I know, however, that I spoke to the Prior about the farmer's offer the day before my departure. He told me that it would be better to accept his offer rather than the one being made by someone else.

I beg you, Monsieur, never to allow one of our doorkeepers to leave the door for any reason whatsoever; see that there are always two of them.

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**Letter 331.** - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>A small commune in Essonne.

<sup>2</sup>Adrien Le Bon.

You did not tell me who is taking care of the prisons and who has the keys to them.

What shall I say to you about those individuals who are asking to become members of the Company? Nothing, except that I shall abide by your decision in their regard. The young man from Caen, who is fearful of his father's affection, must be under consideration for a longer time, especially if his father is poor and the boy has nothing really worthy of commendation.

I am writing this just after getting out of bed. This letter can serve for M. de Marceille as well. I ask him to give eight hundred livres to Alexandre for the fabric and to try to stretch out what he has left. On my return, we shall see what can be done in order for us to have enough to live on. I earnestly entreat him to take care of his health — and Alexandre of his — and to send Henri to Saint-Denis to get the fabric.

If he is hard up, M. de Marceille could tell M. de Vincy that I shall consider the request he made for a boy. But as for our Brother Besson, we must not even think of him. I greet him most humbly. Also, assure the Prior of my obedience if you go to see him, and give my regards to M. Cosin.

Good day, Monsieur, I am your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

A butcher from around Limouiron, who is the brother of the Mother Superior of the Sisters of Charity at the Place Royale,<sup>3</sup> will be bringing his flock of sheep to spend the night at Saint-Lazare. Please make arrangements with the farmer to lend him the stables. Lodge the gentleman and his servants in our house and treat them cordially on their way both to and from the Saint-Denis fair.

I shall send little Jean back to you tomorrow. M. de Marceille

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<sup>3</sup>A hospital for sick women had been in operation since 1629 near the Place Royale (now the Place des Vosges), on the corner of the rue des Tournelles and the rue des Minimes. It was confided to the Hospitalières de la Charité Notre-Dame. (Cf. Lebeuf, *op. cit.*, p. 359.)

will make an agreement with the haymaker from Villepreux and will send him here only when we notify him.

June 14, 1638

*Addressed:* Monsieur de la Salle, Priest of the Mission, at Saint-Lazare, in Paris

332. - TO DENIS DE CORDES

[1638]<sup>1</sup>

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am leaving for Rueil. We have some urgent business. I most humbly entreat you to offer our apologies to M. Guillotin of Etampes who is supposed to come and see you this afternoon about the farm in Fréneville and conclude, or rather sign the contract, if you find it acceptable. M. de Marceille will bring you the money and specify the conditions if need be. The price is twelve hundred livres out of which the sum of fifty livres revenue at eight and one third per cent must be retained on the one hand and ten livres on the other. It would be wise to procure the papers he has and to have the number of acres of land specified. There are said to be 150, a great number of which are lying fallow.

Pardon such great importunity, Monsieur. I am your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Monday morning

*Addressed:* Monsieur de Marceille to be given to Monsieur de Cordes, Counselor of the Châtelet

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**Letter 332.** - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>An unknown hand added 1638 after the words *Monday morning*.

333. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

*Monsieur,*

*I have just been told that there is contagion in the house where the Sisters from the Hôtel-Dieu are living. Please let me know whether we should take them out of there or whether, while allowing them to stay, we should advise the ladies not to go there. And should we ourselves go there — I mean the Sisters from here? Is there any harm in our taking them some preserves for the Hôtel-Dieu?*

*You have forgotten the critical situation that I told you I had to discuss with you. I do not know what our good God is trying to make me understand, but I hope you will enlighten me, since I am, Monsieur, your most humble daughter and most grateful servant.*

L. DE M.

*I am not saying a thing to you about my acting so amiss with regard to the Sisters. I await whatever directions you may choose to give me.*

*July 2 [Probably 1638]<sup>1</sup>*

*Addressed: Monsieur Vincent*

334. - TO JEAN DE FONTENEIL, IN BORDEAUX

*Monsieur,*

*The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!*

*I thank you a thousand times for the alms you gave poor Beyrie<sup>1</sup> and I beg God to be his patience and your reward.*

*I sent your package to Châlons and have received no answer*

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**Letter 333.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The year during which the plague raged with exceptional violence in Paris. Saint Vincent thought it wrong to interrupt the serving of the collation during that time.

**Letter 334.** - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This name is found quite often in the old Catholic registers of Saint Vincent's native village. Could this Beyrie be the son of one of the Saint's sisters?

concerning it to send to you. If you wish to write another letter, I shall give the woman who owns the coach, who is a friend of mine, the special responsibility of delivering it.

I am, moreover, infinitely consoled by the blessing God has been pleased to give your holy community and I am asking Him to bless it more and more. It seems to me that you should in no way be sorry for having spent so much time honoring the hidden life of Our Lord nor should you have any scruples, in the spirit of humility which I think Our Lord has shared with you, about beginning to manifest the dawn of that day on the horizon of events.

You are a source of help for us in Bordeaux on every occasion that arises. I beg you, Monsieur, to forgive me if I make use of it too freely.

We are bringing M. Grenu back here. Perhaps he will stop at your house and be able to meet with Messieurs de Sergis and Brunet or even with M. Boudet, who is going from Brittany to Toulouse. If any of them need exchange money, please give them some, Monsieur, and I shall repay you at the appointed time.

I send regards to the gentlemen of your company with all the humility and respect in my power, and I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, July 20, 1638

*Addressed:* Monsieur de Fonteneil, Canon of the Chapter of Saint-Seurin, in Bordeaux

335. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1638 or 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Would you take a foundling brought here yesterday by some well-to-do people who found him in a field belonging to our house? He is only two or three days old and was baptized yesterday evening at Saint-Laurent. Since he is a foundling, there is nothing to be said against this, unless it be that you are not taking him from the Couche or from the Hôtel-Dieu.<sup>2</sup> If it is thought necessary to take care of that formality, we shall do so. In the meantime, I beg you, Mademoiselle, to take him in and entrust him to a wet nurse.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. D.

Tuesday morning

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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**Letter 335.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter is subsequent to the foundation of the work of the Foundlings (1638). After 1639, Saint Vincent would have written "Tuesday morning" at the beginning of the letter, not at the end.

<sup>2</sup>Saint Vincent appears to be asking Saint Louise either to accept a foundling who had not first been placed in one of the institutions designated by the city (the Couche and the Hôtel-Dieu), or to circumvent established regulations. This would be a new approach in his concern for abandoned infants.

336. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[1638]<sup>1</sup>

*Monsieur,*

*Enclosed is a letter. I feel that it is necessary to do something about this poor young woman immediately. She has so won the hearts of the inhabitants that rumor has it that, if she is removed, no other Sister will be accepted. For a long time now, she has been recommending herself to everyone, especially to some old bachelors named Messieurs de la Noue. She has been obtaining little delicacies from them and has been living well, receiving bottles of wine and pâtés. I most humbly entreat you, for the love of God, to consider the consequences of this unfortunate situation of which I feel I am the cause. Please ask our good God to pardon me, Monsieur, your most humble and most grateful daughter and servant.*

L. DE M.

*Tuesday*

Addressed: *Monsieur Vincent*

337. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1638]<sup>1</sup>

Do not be astonished at seeing the rebellion of that poor creature. We shall see many more like her, if we live on; and should we not suffer as much from our own as Our Lord did from His? Let us be truly submissive to His good pleasure in the situation of the moment. We must try to get her to come here, either by my writing to her myself, or by sending the founding Lady or a priest

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**Letter 336.** - Autograph letter. *Revue des Documents Historiques* (June 1873), p. 45, facsimile.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written after no. 289 and before the departure of Barbe Angiboust for Richelieu.

**Letter 337.** - Autograph letter. *Revue des Documents Historiques* (June 1873), p. 45, facsimile.

<sup>1</sup>This letter is a reply to the preceding one.

from this house, for we really must withdraw her. You shall see the letter she wrote me. *O bon Dieu*, how that poor creature deceived me!

Please let me know your thoughts on the matter. Would Barbe<sup>2</sup> be more apt to win her over, or would your health permit you to take little Jeanne<sup>3</sup> there and settle her in the place?

If it is in Nogent that she wishes to live, Madame de Brou,<sup>4</sup> M. de Vincy's cousin, is in charge there.

VINCENT DEPAUL

338. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1638 or 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have had M. de la Salle write again to the Pastor in Saint-Germain, requesting him to send that Sister back. Madame de

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<sup>2</sup>Barbe Angiboust.

<sup>3</sup>Jeanne Lepeintre, whom Madame Goussault, her mistress, had sent to the Daughters of Charity. Saint Vincent says elsewhere that she was "a very fine girl, wise and gentle." Both he and Saint Louise had great confidence in her because of her intelligence and organizing ability. She was first employed at the school of the Charity in Saint-Germain-en-Laye (1642). In the spring of 1646, after installing the Sisters in the hospital of Le Mans, she returned to Paris where she was put in charge of the Motherhouse while Saint Louise was establishing the house in Nantes. Jeanne then became Superior in Nantes (1647) where great difficulties were being encountered. In 1654 she headed the foundation in Châteaudun and then in 1657, in Salpêtrière (cf. *Ecrits spirituels*, L.64, n.1). In the manuscript, *Recueil de Pièces relatives aux Filles de la Charité* (p. 24), we read: "During the lifetime of Mademoiselle Le Gras, she appeared to be a hypochondriac. Moreover, she could not be made to do what she did not like, nor would she accept other opinions than those of her own mind." She was reprimanded more than once by Saint Vincent because of this fault. Her last years were sad ones spent at the Nom-de-Jésus, to which she had to be committed because she was no longer rational.

<sup>4</sup>A Lady of Charity.

**Letter 338.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter belongs to the period between the foundation of Saint-Germain-en-Laye and the death of Madame Goussault, September 20, 1639.



Chaumont just wrote to me about the matter at the request of Mademoiselle Chemerault<sup>2</sup> who told her about it last night. We shall have to do what we can about the case but, in the end, we shall have to yield to the pressure if influential people get involved.

Madame Goussault is satisfied with Barbe's sister.<sup>3</sup> I think you would be wise to hold on to her. Her brother is about to return home.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

I instructed Madame Goussault to send you Madame Chaumont's letter which I just sent to her.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

339. - TO ROBERT DE SERGIS, IN ANGOULEME

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received the letter you wrote to me partly in Plassac<sup>1</sup> and partly in Angoulême on the feast of Saint Martha.<sup>2</sup> I understand from it, I think, that the difficulties people had put in your mind have subsided; I always believed that would be the case. All I have

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<sup>2</sup>One of the maids of honor of the Queen, Anne of Austria. She participated in the schemes of Cardinal Richelieu against the Queen.

<sup>3</sup>Cécile-Agnès Angiboust rendered great service to the Community, especially at the hospital of Angers, where she was Superior from 1647 to 1657. "Sister Cécile is invaluable," said Saint Vincent after seeing her at work.

**Letter 339.** - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>A small locality in Charente.

<sup>2</sup>July 29.

to ask you on that point, Monsieur, is that you work at ridding yourself of the esteem you have had up to now for the glitter and sparkle of virtue and the vain applause of the world, which Our Lord so assiduously avoided and so often recommends us to shun, and that you labor in earnest to acquire true and solid virtues.

I am a little upset that M. Brunet left without you, contrary to the rule which obliges us not to separate. In the name of God, Monsieur, let us be very exact in observing all that has been prescribed for us, and Our Lord will bless us. The contrary leaves everything to be feared.

I am very glad that you are pleased to have M. Boudet, and indeed you have good reason to be, for he is a holy soul. I hope you will consider him as such. However, that will not prevent you from continuing as director until you receive an order to the contrary. I have written to the Archbishop of Toulouse<sup>3</sup> about that.

I would be very happy if you would visit the Charities in Saintonge and take with you that good priest from Plassac, until you meet M. Boudet in Bordeaux. He has been told to go there as soon as possible.

Moreover, I am very glad about the opportunity you have of getting some money in Agen. I shall have it returned here by a bill of exchange. There are still one hundred livres left to pay according to the account and your receipts, which the Vicar General sent me yesterday. I shall have the money dispatched to him today. He has received seven hundred livres from us, and you, eight hundred from there. Is that correct?

I think it would also be well for you to visit the Charities established in the diocese of Bordeaux. M. Fonteneil will give you the names of the places. When you pass through Bourg,<sup>4</sup> however, visit the one there; it is on your way back to Bordeaux. Bourg is on the Garonne between Blaye and Bordeaux. I am, in the love of

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<sup>3</sup>Charles de Montchal.

<sup>4</sup>Principal town of a canton in Gironde.

Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, August 14, 1638

*Addressed:* Monsieur de Sergis, Priest of the Congregation of the Mission, presently in the service of the Bishop of Angoulême, in Angoulême

340. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[Around 1638]<sup>1</sup>

*Monsieur,*

*I am going to send your answer to Madame Pelletier by Sister Turgis. I am so wicked as to have wished that those instructions about her returning soon had not been in it.*

*Monsieur de Liancourt stopped here yesterday. I did not see him, but he left word that his wife was very upset about my return.*

*My little bloodletting yesterday helped me to perspire all night, giving me great relief, thank God. As a result, I have gotten out of bed. Since I do not have sufficient strength or health to come and visit you, considering the bad weather, and since I need to talk to you, I had word sent to the brother at the door, asking you to take the trouble to come here. I am taking this liberty because of the confidence you have given me in this regard before, since I believe myself always to be, Monsieur, your most humble and most grateful daughter and servant.*

L. DE M.

*Sunday*

*Addressed: Monsieur Vincent*

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**Letter 340.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The presence in Paris or in its environs of Madame Pelletier and of Sister Turgis requires this approximate date.

341. - TO NOEL BRULART DE SILLERY

[Between 1634 and 1640]<sup>1</sup>

Monsieur,

I have never experienced such an amiable goodness as yours and, if I had as many graces as you, I would offer you one of the most beautiful thank-you's that you have ever received. Since Our Lord has not given me that ability, may He Himself be my power to thank you and to reveal to your good heart the esteem that our whole Congregation and I myself in particular have for you, and the constant and most tender affection it has pleased His Divine Majesty to give me for your worthy person.

I wish I had the words to express my gratitude for the charity and gifts this poor Little Company is continually receiving from your generosity. May Our Lord be your reward and may He enhance the crown He has prepared for you in Heaven while you do your utmost to establish His empire in souls on earth.

342. - TO JEAN BECU, IN AMIENS

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am more consoled than I can tell you by the news I learned from your letter, which I have just received. I thank God and good M. Pecoul. *O mon Dieu*, how obligated we are to that great servant of God! Please give him my most humble regards and assure him of my gratitude.

I think that you should not even consider suing the King's

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**Letter 341.** - *Vie de l'illustre serviteur de Dieu Noël Brulart de Sillery*, p. 126.

<sup>1</sup>It was between these two dates that Noël Brulart de Sillery lavished his favors on the Congregation of the Mission.

**Letter 342.** - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

attorney. You would only make him twice as antagonistic and you do not need that.

Starting tomorrow, I shall work on obtaining the letters necessary for your nephew. There is no need for you to stay there, or to commission any friend to attend to the confirmation of the letters. It will be a long, drawn out affair and I do not know whether it is advisable to pursue it hastily at the present time. Criminal affairs need to mature so that they can be resolved more easily. Present all the written statements from here that you can. It would be well for you to seek the advice of one or two well-known lawyers in Amiens to see how you are to proceed, and meet with both of them together for that purpose. When you come here, we shall do the same thing here. Please bring their advice in writing.

We shall be most happy to send what you mentioned to the good niece of your benefactor. I send him my regards and am for him, for M. Leleu, and for you, Monsieur, a most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, August 29, 1638

Since receiving your letter, I reread the previous one and noticed that we need some documents from there in order to obtain the royal letters. We shall postpone working on this until your return. In fact, right now we would not know what to go on.

*Addressed:* Monsieur Antoine, organist-chaplain of Notre-Dame, residing near Saint-Remy,<sup>1</sup> to be delivered to Monsieur Bécu, Priest of the Mission, in Amiens

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<sup>1</sup>A church in Amiens.

343. - TO BERNARD CODOING,<sup>1</sup> IN RICHELIEU

August 29, 1638

I praise God, Monsieur, for the grace He has given you to overcome yourself as you did when you were requested to go to the country. I beg Him to make you absolute master of yourself so that you have only one and the same will with God always and in all things, which is indeed the perfect state for anyone in our vocation.

But the consolation my soul has received in that regard has been tinged with sorrow because of your illness. In the name of Our Lord, Monsieur, do all you can to regain your health and take good care of it so that you can serve God and the poor for a longer time. This moderate care does not preclude the obligation we have of generously risking our lives when the salvation of our neighbor is concerned. O Monsieur, how earnestly I beg God to animate all of us with such generosity!

344. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

I shall try to come to La Chapelle or to send for your Sisters on Saturday. I no longer have my slight fever, it seems to me, or very little. Be assured, Mademoiselle, that I shall take greater care of my health, if anything can be added to the care I am taking, because you bid me to do so.

I beg Our Lord to bless your trip and you yourself, and to

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**Letter 343.** - Reg. 2, p. 33.

<sup>1</sup>The Register has this letter addressed to: "M. N. in Richelieu." The inscription "To the same M. N.," placed at the head of the two letters that follow in this Register, one dated December 12, 1638, and the other May 25, 1642, allow us to conclude that all three were destined for Bernard Codoing, since there is no doubt that the third one is for him.

**Letter 344.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 50.

multiply His blessings on your soul and that of Madame Goussault. Please be very cheerful with her, even though you should have to lessen a bit that somewhat serious disposition which nature has bestowed on you and which grace is tempering by the mercy of God. I am, in His love. . . .

Paris, August 30, 1638

**344a. - TO CHARLES DE MONTCHAL  
ARCHBISHOP OF TOULOUSE**

[September 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Your Excellency,

I most humbly beg your pardon if I do not have the honor of seeing you this afternoon. I promised the Bishop of Grasse,<sup>2</sup> the Bishop of Bayonne,<sup>3</sup> and Monsieur Pavillon that I would spend this afternoon with them, even though I am in retreat. I also promised Commander de Sillery that I would speak with him late today. I am ashamed, Your Excellency, that I am obliged to treat you in this way. Your charity, which has no limits in our regard, so it seems, will forgive me.

I just wrote to the Bishop of Beauvais<sup>4</sup> this minute, and I assure you, Your Excellency, that at least half the letter is about you and what Our Lord is accomplishing through you.

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**Letter 344a.** - According to Coste, the original was in the house of the Daughters of Charity, 14 rue de la Ville-l'Evêque, Paris. This house has since closed and the present location of the letter is unknown. Originally no. 272, the placement of the letter has been altered to comply with a date correction supplied by Coste in vol. XIII.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written after the appointment of Antoine Godeau to the bishopric of Grasse and of François Fouquet to that of Bayonne, before the consecration of Nicolas Pavillon, and during the month in which Saint Vincent was accustomed to making his annual retreat.

<sup>2</sup>Antoine Godeau.

<sup>3</sup>François Fouquet.

<sup>4</sup>Augustin Potier.

I am, in the love of the same Lord, Your Excellency, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* The Most Reverend Archbishop of Toulouse

345. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[September 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am late in answering you; the difficulties I have had since your letter are the reason for it. I praise God for the satisfaction you must have received from your son and beg Him to grant him the grace of carrying out his resolutions.

As for the young man, I have no fault to find, if you have spoken to him about it, except that I cannot help but be afraid that, by doing more than you are able, something may happen. Nevertheless, please pay no attention at all to what I say about the matter.

I have been to Saint-Germain.<sup>2</sup> Madame de Liancourt is feeling better. I told her about your offering to come and take care of her, to which she replied: "*O mon Dieu*, that would be just like her!" She spoke about you several times and about how satisfied she is with her schoolteacher for the girls.

The Charity in Richelieu really needs Sister Barbe now because of the great number of sick people. What do you think,

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**Letter 345.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>On October 1, 1638, Saint Vincent announced to Lambert aux Couteaux the departure of Barbe Angiboust and Louise Ganset for Richelieu. This letter is of an earlier date. Since it mentions the grape harvest, it must be placed in September.

<sup>2</sup>Saint-Germain-en-Laye.



Mademoiselle, of sending her to help those good people in this necessity? Their illnesses are not contagious. In that event, could you not give us Sister Louise for here?<sup>3</sup>

Madame de Chaumont thinks it advisable for you to go to Saint-Germain to see the company<sup>4</sup> in a body and for Madame Goussault to go with you. It is true that people are now in the midst of the grape-harvest. We shall have to see about it in a little while.

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

346. - TO MADAME GOUSSAULT

Saint-Lazare [Between 1636 and 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Madame,

I would have been consoled to see you today, Madame, but it will have to be some other time. Mademoiselle Le Gras spoke to me about hearing her confession tomorrow morning along with those of her Sisters in La Chapelle. She would very much like you to be able to lend her your carriage for that purpose, but I do not know how you can do so since you have so many concerns at present.

I entreat you, Madame, to send her word not to come, in case you have to come here tomorrow morning. What I wanted to tell you does not require you to hurry on my account. In the meantime, I bid you good day and am, in Our Lord. . . .

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<sup>3</sup>For the parish of Saint-Laurent. She accompanied Sister Barbe to Richelieu.

<sup>4</sup>The Confraternity of Charity.

**Letter 346.** - Pémarin, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. I, letter 1007.

<sup>1</sup>Dates of the Sisters' arrival in La Chapelle and the death of Madame Goussault.

347. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[September 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

If you think that Henriette<sup>2</sup> can teach school, fine; try her at it. The experiment would have been better somewhere else; however, do as God inspires you to do. I do not feel that Perrette<sup>3</sup> has a good mind for that sort of work.

It would really be good for you to assemble the Ladies of the Charity, if the Pastor approves; I mean the ones from the town.<sup>4</sup> Madame de Chaumont will be hurt if you and Madame Goussault do not visit her. Ask her not to talk about it to the Queen's<sup>5</sup> maids of honor.

If your health allows you to stay there seven or eight days, do so, and longer if need be. Meanwhile, put Madame Pelletier in charge of the house<sup>6</sup> and give her the regulations she is to maintain. Madame Goussault can return two or three days later and come to get you.

Please tell Madame Goussault that it would be advisable for her to see Madame Souscarrière<sup>7</sup> or Madame Traversay in order to let

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**Letter 347.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter fits naturally between nos. 345 and 348.

<sup>2</sup>Henriette Gesseume.

<sup>3</sup>Perrette Chefdeville.

<sup>4</sup>The Charity of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, referred to here, was made up of maids of honor or ladies-in-waiting to the Queen and of ladies from the town. Saint Vincent is asking Saint Louise to assemble the latter only. Nevertheless, he urges her to visit the president, Madame de Chaumont.

<sup>5</sup>Queen Anne of Austria.

<sup>6</sup>Madame Pelletier was a Daughter of Charity whom Saint Vincent was suggesting as head of the Motherhouse in Saint Louise's absence.

<sup>7</sup>Marie du Tremblay, widow since 1627 of Maximilien Grangier, Seigneur de Souscarrière, Master of Requests, intendant of justice in Lyons, then State Councillor for ordinary affairs. Her daughter, Marguerite, married Antoine Goussault, the eldest son of Madame Goussault. In 1639, Madame de Souscarrière succeeded the latter as president of the Ladies of Charity. She died in September 1670.

the Hôtel Dieu know that the snack<sup>8</sup> will be discontinued. Tell her also that I forgot to mention the house and that I shall speak to Father Sirmond<sup>9</sup> at the first opportunity.

Courage now! I beg Our Lord, meanwhile, to bless your trip and I am, in His love, your servant.

V. D. P.

Sunday morning

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

348. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[September 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

Early tomorrow, therefore, we shall have to send for Sister Barbe and, today, we must send for Henriette<sup>2</sup> and put Nicole in her place. But it would be wise for you to get her word that she

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<sup>8</sup>In speaking of the Ladies of Charity, Abelly writes (*op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXIX, p. 136): "After dinner, around three o'clock, they brought a snack for everyone: namely, white bread, cookies, preserves and jelly, grapes and cherries in season, and during the winter, lemons, stewed pears, and sugared fruit. . . . Wearing aprons, four or five together would take turns each day going to distribute this snack. They would divide themselves among the wards and go from bed to bed serving these little sweets." The expense increased with the number of the sick and the Ladies soon had to omit the bread, cookies, and lemons. Several times, especially in 1638 and 1649, they discontinued the snack, either because of contagious diseases or for economic reasons. The 1638 interruption lasted twenty days and was caused by the plague, which obliged the Daughters of Charity employed at the Hôtel-Dieu to leave their lodgings. (Cf. Coste, *op. cit.*, p. 11.)

<sup>9</sup>A renowned Jesuit, born in Riom in 1559. He first taught in Paris, then was called to Rome to serve as secretary to the Superior General. He became the confessor of Louis XIII in 1637 and died in 1651. We are indebted to him for a collection of the old synods of France. He also edited some works of the Fathers and ecclesiastical authors.

**Letter 348.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter seems in place near no. 347.

<sup>2</sup>Henriette Gesseaume.

will come back every time that she is recalled. The trip to Notre-Dame-des-Vertus<sup>3</sup> may enable her to obtain some grace from God.

I am, in His love, your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

### 349. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

That good young woman arouses my compassion, as she does yours, but what can we do? No religious community will take on that financial burden. Would it not be better to send her back to her native place? If you think it advisable to talk the matter over seriously with Mademoiselle Musnier and to keep her for two weeks, that is fine.

This morning I wrote to Madame Traversay and told her to fill up to seven of the little children's vacancies, taking some from the Hôtel-Dieu and some from the Couche, until you have another wet nurse, a goat, and a cow.

Barbe<sup>2</sup> could never come so early in the morning that I would not be able to talk with her.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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<sup>3</sup>In Aubervilliers.

**Letter 349.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter certainly dates from the early days of the work of the Foundlings, i.e., from 1638. The presence of Barbe in Paris indicates that it was written in early October at the latest.

<sup>2</sup>Barbe Angiboust.

350. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[September 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am very glad that your son has returned and is at the collège.<sup>2</sup> He is better off there than here<sup>3</sup> because the majority are in retreat and the others either ill or at the seminary. I would be quite pleased, however, for him to come and spend a couple of days here after they come out of retreat, around Wednesday of next week.

I am writing to you hurriedly. You would ease my mind by sending me word concerning the condition of your health, the state of your Sisters, and the situation at the Hôtel-Dieu. You knew that M. Lavocat<sup>4</sup> felt that we should not begin again until after the feast of Saint Denis,<sup>5</sup> and someday you shall know that I am more than I tell you, in His love, your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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**Letter 350.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The similarity of content in this letter and in nos. 333 and 347 seems to indicate the year 1638. Reference to the feast of Saint Denis (October 9) suggests that the letter was written in September.

<sup>2</sup>At the Collège des Bons-Enfants.

<sup>3</sup>At Saint-Lazare.

<sup>4</sup>At the beginning of the constitutions of the Augustinian nuns we read the following which will acquaint us with him: "These present constitutions were drawn up by M. François Lavocat, priest, councillor, chaplain to the King, Abbé of Notre-Dame d'Humblières and Canon of the Church of Paris, who was entrusted by the gentlemen of the aforesaid Church with the office of visitor of this hospital (Hôtel-Dieu). He exercised this duty for twelve years with unbelievable charity and assiduity, reviving devotedness and enthusiasm in the hospital for the sick. While carrying on these sacred duties, he was struck down by the fever of which he died on January 15, 1646, at the age of forty-eight. His body rests in Notre-Dame before the altar of the Virgin and his heart, near the main altar of the Hôtel-Dieu." He was also chamberlain of the chapter and, therefore, responsible for the administration of the capitular finances.

<sup>5</sup>This refers perhaps to the distribution of the snack at the Hôtel-Dieu, mentioned in no. 347.

351. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 1, 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I had told you I would come to see you today and I expected to do so, but a little indisposition has come upon me and is depriving me of that possibility. I beg you to excuse me, Mademoiselle, and because of this difficulty to send word to the Sisters not to come to your house today.

I am sending you fifty livres; please give them to Barbe and Louise for their trip. It would be well for them to take the coach to Tours and there to inquire about a man who usually escorts those who wish to go to Richelieu. They should engage him and hire a donkey or a little cart to go to Richelieu which is ten leagues away. There they shall do what they can for the sick poor according to the orders of M. Lambert or whoever takes his place. Enclosed is a letter I wrote to him.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

The price of the coach to Tours is twelve livres per person. I shall tell one of our people to reserve a place for them on the first one to leave.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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**Letter 351.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The letter to Lambert aux Couteaux (no. 352), mentioned in this letter, bears the date October 1, 1638. It is reasonable to assume that this letter to Saint Louise was written on the same date.

352. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, IN RICHELIEU

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Here are two Daughters of Charity<sup>1</sup> coming to see you about relieving the Ladies of the Charity and assisting the sick poor. Both of them know how to teach little girls. We shall be able to leave you one of them for that purpose when there are fewer sick people, and the other one will return home. The Duchesse d'Aiguillon sent me word that she would write to M. de Grandpré<sup>2</sup> about arranging lodgings for them. I hope that she, or else His Eminence,<sup>3</sup> will also give orders regarding their maintenance. I beg you, however, to provide them with what they need as far as food is concerned.

I am worried about your illness and about that of Messieurs Codoing, Durot, and Buissot. If M. Codoing has quartan fever, as he told me he suspected, we shall have to find a way of bringing him back here, by cart as far as Tours and from there by coach, if his attacks are not too violent.

In the name of God, Monsieur, do all you can and spare nothing for the sake of your health. I am praying to God and having others pray that He restore you completely.

In ten or fifteen days, I shall send you two or three men from the Company and perhaps M. Boudet will come to Richelieu from Bordeaux. He is in Bordeaux a little indisposed. M. de Sergis left him there for treatment because he had to leave for Toulouse. If he comes to Richelieu, I commend him to you. If Abbé Olier is correct, good M. Boudet is a saint. He was with him in Brittany where he recognized his virtue. He wrote to me about him in terms expressing quite well the opinion he has of him. I am the only one who is a miserable sinner, who does only harm on earth.

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Letter 352. - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Sisters Barbe Angiboust and Louise Ganset.

<sup>2</sup>Antoine-François de Joyeuse, Comte de Grandpré.

<sup>3</sup>Cardinal Richelieu.

I must hope that God will be pleased to take me from it soon, as I trust from His goodness, and that He will be merciful to me.

I was arranging the time schedule for my trip so that I could come and see you when the Archbishop gave me a mandate to visit a religious house in the city. It will take me a rather long time.<sup>4</sup> I had asked him to excuse me from doing it, and he had in fact done so; but, as he was leaving for Anjou, he sent me word that he had to take back the dispensation he had been pleased to grant me for some special and important reasons which he would tell me on his return. Well now, I am a child of obedience. I think that if he ordered me to go to the ends of his diocese and stay there all my life, I would do it as if Our Lord were giving me the order. The solitude or the work that he gave me would be an anticipated paradise since I would be carrying out the good pleasure of God.

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

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, October 1, 1638

*Addressed:* Monsieur Lambert, Superior of the Priests of the Mission, in Richelieu

353. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 2, 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am not writing to you with my own hand; I had a bloodletting

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<sup>4</sup>The trip was postponed. Saint Vincent was back from Richelieu before the middle of December.

**Letter 353.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), original or seventeenth century copy.

<sup>1</sup>The content of this letter connects it closely to nos. 351 and 352. No. 351 is probably the



this morning for a slight ailment which is preventing me from going to see good Madame de Liancourt. I think that you are not able to bear the fatigue of being around her and that would upset her.

There is no harm in allowing Sister Louise to go and visit Monsieur de Bezay,<sup>2</sup> or in your telling her to defer settling her affairs. I gave orders today for two [places] to be reserved and for a deposit to be put down on the coach for Tours. This evening I shall know the day, the time, and the place of its departure. I think it would be wise to give the role of superior to Sister Barbe<sup>3</sup> until other arrangements can be made. It seems to me that it would be very good for them indeed to avail themselves of their little work when there are no longer many sick people.

I praise God for the greater satisfaction you are receiving from your son.

I forgot to write to Monsieur Dehorgny<sup>4</sup> about the little boy. Just send him a note by the boy himself, in case I forget.

Sister Elisabeth<sup>5</sup> can make her confession to anyone else you consider suitable. As for Jacqueline, you have no choice but to send her back.

I am very glad that you kept Sister Marguerite and are having her make a retreat.

Do you think, Mademoiselle, that the two Sisters in this parish can assist the sick while teaching school? If so, which I doubt, it would be well to send Sister Jacqueline to Saint-Jacques parish in Sister Marguerite's place. But, if you do that, you will have to say something beforehand to the Pastor and the officers of the Charity in the parish.

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letter Saint Vincent says he is enclosing with this one. The day, Saturday, added at the end of the letter, was very likely the Saturday following October 1, 1638, the date of no. 352, i.e., October 2, 1638.

<sup>2</sup>Perhaps Antoine du Deffand, chevalier, Seigneur du Tremblay, Fontenay, Sementron, Bezée, and other places.

<sup>3</sup>Barbe Angiboust.

<sup>4</sup>At that time director of the Collège des Bons-Enfants.

<sup>5</sup>Elisabeth Martin.

I wrote you the enclosed letter yesterday, but was not able to send it to you.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saturday, at eleven o'clock

354. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Most willingly do I pray Our Lord to give His holy blessing to our dear Sisters and to grant them a share in the spirit He gave to the holy women who accompanied and cooperated with Him in assisting the sick poor and instructing children. *Bon Dieu*, Mademoiselle, what happiness for those good Sisters to be about to continue the charity Our Lord exercised on earth in the place where they are going! And who would think, seeing them together, those two headpieces,<sup>2</sup> in the coach, that they are departing for a work so admirable in the eyes of God and the angels that the God-Man found it worthy of Himself and of His holy Mother?

Oh! how Heaven will rejoice at seeing that and how admirable will be the praises they will receive in the next world! They will go to judgment day with their heads held high! Surely, it seems to me that crowns and empires are as mud in comparison with the diadems with which they shall be crowned.

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**Letter 354.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The month and year of the departure of Sisters Barbe and Louise for Richelieu.

<sup>2</sup>Allusion to the headdress of the Daughters of Charity. "The first Daughters of Charity, almost all natives of the environs of Paris, had kept the dress commonly worn by the women of the lower class, namely, a gray serge dress and a little coif or kerchief of white linen called a toquois, which hid the hair." (Cf. Baunard, *op. cit.*, p. 297.)

All that remains is to advise them to comport themselves in the spirit of the Blessed Virgin on their journey and in their actions. Let them often see her as though before their eyes, in front of or beside them, and act as they imagine the Blessed Virgin would have acted. Let them contemplate her charity and humility and be very humble before God, cordial among themselves, charitable to everyone, and a source of disedification to no one. Let them carry out their little spiritual exercises every morning, either before the coach sets out or along the way. Let them take along some small book to read now and again or, at other times, recite their chaplet.

Let them share in the conversations pertaining to God, but by no means in those concerning the world, and still less, in indecent talk. Let them be rocks against any familiarity that men might wish to take with them. They shall sleep in a separate room which they shall first request at the inns, or in a room with some upright women, if there are any on the coach. If there are no separate rooms in the coach inns, let them lodge nearby, if they can find such accommodation.

When they arrive in Richelieu, they shall first go to greet the Blessed Sacrament and visit M. Lambert, receiving his orders, which they shall try to carry out with regard to the sick and the children who will attend the school. They shall observe the little daily exercises they now practice and go to confession only once a week if there is no special feast during the week. They shall try to do good to the souls of the poor while taking care of their bodies, and they shall honor and obey the officers of the Charity and have great respect for the others, encouraging them to love their holy occupation. If they continue in this way, God will judge that they have led a very holy life and, from being poor young women, they shall become great queens in Heaven. This is what I ask of God, in Whose love I am, for them and for their dear Superioress, a most humble servant.

V. D.

Please let me know if the little boy gave you the fifty livres I sent you by him, and pray to God for good Madame de Liancourt who has grown much worse.<sup>3</sup>

355. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around October 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

When I have the pleasure of seeing you, I shall tell you about your son's state of mind with regard to Orders. I do not know if I shall be coming to La Chapelle soon. If I do not come, comply with the wishes of Madame de Marillac<sup>2</sup> and her son.<sup>3</sup> Send for the carriage whenever you wish. It would be better to do it tomorrow, Sunday, since you will have to sleep there because of the fast day. But what is the trouble with that good gentleman and with his wife's pregnancy? I do not know who communicates such an eager interest in them to me, but that family seems to move my heart with tenderness.

I am awaiting the safe-conduct for which the Chancellor<sup>4</sup> gave us reason to hope. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saturday morning

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<sup>3</sup>Words scratched out: She sent me word to go and visit M. Martinot. . . . I begged her to excuse me . . . because. . . .

**Letter 355.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The information about the impending birth of a child to Michel de Marillac, Saint Louise's cousin, and Jeanne Potier permits us to assign a date for this letter. This child, René, was baptized February 18, 1639.

<sup>2</sup>Marie de Creil, widow of René de Marillac.

<sup>3</sup>Michel de Marillac, Counselor in the Parlement of Paris, grandson of the Keeper of the Seals who bore the same name.

<sup>4</sup>Pierre Séguier.

I received your note this morning after writing the above letter. In response, I shall tell you that your son told Monsieur de la Salle that he was entering into that state of life only because you wished it, that he wished he were dead<sup>5</sup> because of it, and that, in order to please you, he would take the Minor Orders. Now, is that a vocation? I think he would rather die than wish your death. Be that as it may, whether it springs from nature or from the devil, his will is not free to make a decision in a matter of such importance and you must not wish him to do so. Some time ago, a good young man in this city took the [sub-diaconate]<sup>6</sup> in a similar state of mind and was not able to go on to the other Orders. Do you want to expose your son to the same danger? Allow God to lead him; He is more his Father than you are his mother and loves him more than you do. Allow Him to guide him. He will be quite capable of calling him some other time if He wants him, or of giving him the occupation which is proper for his salvation. I remember a priest, formerly in this house, who took Holy Orders in a troubled state of mind such as that. God knows where he is now!

Good day, Mademoiselle. Belong wholly to Our Lord and conform yourself to His good pleasure. I am, in His love, your servant.

V. D.

Please make your meditation on Zebedee [’s wife] and her sons. As she was ardently seeking the establishment of her children, Our Lord said to them: “You do not know what you are asking.”<sup>7</sup>

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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<sup>5</sup>First wording: “that he wished you were dead and himself as well.”

<sup>6</sup>Saint Vincent wrote: “sub-deacon,” but it is evident that “sub-diaconate” is the correct term. With the reception of the sub-diaconate one obliged himself to celibacy and the recitation of the Divine Office for life.

<sup>7</sup>Mt. 20: 20-23.

356. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1640]<sup>1</sup>

I most humbly entreat you, Mademoiselle, to let me know whether you think I should come and see you this afternoon to talk to your Sisters or whether I should wait until tomorrow morning. Let me know also if there will be any others besides your own.

In the meantime, I wish you a good day and I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

Sunday morning

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

357. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I thank God a thousand times that you look so well and beg Him to keep you in perfect health. I agree with your good Pastor that you should receive Communion at home. It does not matter that you do not feel so great a desire to do so. Our Lord is doing this purposely, I trust, so that you may have the merit of obedience joined to that of the love for which you will do it, and which I hope His goodness will grant you.

I did indeed see your son yesterday and I love him more dearly than I can tell you, but I do not like you to allow the overaffection-

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**Letter 356.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>After 1639, the words "Sunday morning" would have been written at the beginning of the letter.

**Letter 357.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

ate thoughts you have in his regard. They are contrary to reason and consequently to God. He wants mothers to share their goods with their children but not to deprive themselves of everything. Courage, we shall talk about it as soon as I can come to see you, which will be after the feast.

Oh! how I would like to be able to tell you everything that was said here yesterday at the conference concerning the reasons we have for worthily celebrating this feast and the means for doing so! To be sure, I am quite consoled by it and ask Our Lord to impart it to you Himself.

I am sending you the book on condition that you read or have read from it only two or three sonnets a day, at different times spaced far apart; you would become too engrossed in it.

I am angry with M. Dehorgny for going off to the country without sending you any money. Let me know if you need some. I have the key to the safe but not the spare time to go and get it.

I have never been more busy, or more your servant, in the love of Our Lord.

V. D.

Please take that young woman from Lorraine in order to try her out in the meantime.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

358. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR, IN RICHELIEU

November 1, 1638

. . . M. Fouquet, the President,<sup>1</sup> has been cured of dropsy by using half a glass of chervil<sup>2</sup> juice mixed well with an equal amount of white wine and strained through a cloth. It is taken

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Letter 358. - Reg. 2, p. 264.

<sup>1</sup>François Fouquet. On June 2, Saint Vincent wrote that he was extremely ill.

<sup>2</sup>An aromatic herb of the carrot family.

fasting, without eating for two hours afterwards, and without drinking any more than half a pint of liquid at each meal. One of our brothers at the seminary was cured of the same illness by the same means. Please have N. make use of it and continue it for some time. It is a very efficacious and easy remedy.

359. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LA CHAPELLE

[Between 1636 and 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received two of your letters or rather one in two parts, and saw and spoke to your son afterwards, without letting him be aware that I knew anything about what happened yesterday. Now, he told me very calmly and soberly that he had seen you and that you had been feeling somewhat ill.

After that, I spoke to him about his vocation and whether he was persevering in it. He told me quite emphatically yes, that he was going to the Sorbonne<sup>2</sup> for that purpose, and that he was determined to do well. That is why I thought there was no need to talk to him, or even suspect what you fear. Therefore, please be at peace about it. And what is more, even though the things you fear come about, you should still adore God's Providence in his regard and believe that the journey or the change of state would contribute to his salvation and perhaps to his greater perfection.

Alas! Mademoiselle, if all those who have left their parents were in danger of being lost, where would I be? Oh, well! remember that everything helps the predestined to reach their goal

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**Letter 359.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Before 1636, Saint Louise was not in La Chapelle; after 1639, the Saint would have begun his letter with the words that end it: "Collège des. . ."

<sup>2</sup>Probably to study theology there.



and that I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Collège des Bons-Enfants, at eleven o'clock

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in La Chapelle

360. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1633<sup>1</sup> and 1639<sup>2</sup>]

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Thank you for looking after me and please take care of your own health and do not do so much.

As for the matter you mention, assure those good religious that I shall talk to the Dean about the preservation of their community, but I do not feel that you should speak to the ladies in favor of keeping that individual. It would be useless and harmful, as would recourse to the Cardinal.<sup>3</sup> But with regard to the former, it is up to them to take the required steps; they will not take your advice in any case.

As for your Sisters, after this we shall be at your service and theirs. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your servant.

V. D.

Saturday morning

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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**Letter 360.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The date of the foundation of the Daughters of Charity.

<sup>2</sup>After 1639, Saint Vincent would have written "Saturday morning" at the beginning of the letter.

<sup>3</sup>Cardinal Richelieu.

361. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

A warm welcome to you and praise to Our Lord for the health He has given you. In the name of God, Mademoiselle, take care of it. If I can, I shall come and see you tomorrow, or at least the day after.

Enclosed is the reply to the Duchesse de Liancourt. Please send it to her.

Your son has just left here. He seems to have changed his mind or to be willing to change it, although I said only two words to him.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

362. - TO MADAME GOUSSAULT

[November 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Madame,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Thank you for taking care of me and my journey and for the prayers you will offer for those intentions. Please excuse me if I do not wait for you; I promised to leave this morning.

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**Letter 361.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

**Letter 362.** - The original autograph letter is at the house of the Priests of the Mission, via San Nicola da Tolentino, Naples. There is also a manuscript copy of the letter in the Archives of the Mission in Paris.

<sup>1</sup>Reference to Saint Vincent's impending departure for Richelieu and to Marie-Marthe Goussault's suitors suggests the date for this letter.

You must recommend those new proposals to God with the gratitude and courtesy customarily extended to people in such cases. Is it not well for you to know definitely your daughter's<sup>2</sup> wishes? The last one mentioned to you is a fine man with an excellent mind and exceptional judgment for his age. But, considering what you know, Lotin<sup>3</sup> seems preferable, I think, although less well off. However, you will need marvelous courtesy to act that way towards the last man proposed. Under the circumstances, you can cite the family's wishes and the long negotiation. I shall recommend the matter, your health, and your whole family to Notre-Dame-des-Ardilliers<sup>4</sup> with a very special affection and a like tenderness. God knows to what extent He has filled my heart with this fondness for you and how much I feel it now as I speak to you, I who am, in the love of Our Lord, Madame, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Monday morning

I am on my way to say good-bye to Mademoiselle Le Gras and shall tell her about this.

*Addressed:* Madame Goussault, the President's wife

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<sup>2</sup>Marie-Marthe Goussault. Madame Goussault had five children: Antoine, Sieur de Roquemone, Master of Accounts; Guillaume, made Counselor in the Parlement on May 27, 1653; Jacques, a priest, Doctor of the Sorbonne; Marie-Marthe, married to Nicolas Lotin on January 10, 1639; and Michel, husband of Elisabeth Compaing.

<sup>3</sup>Nicolas Lotin, Seigneur de Martilly, was the son of Guillaume, Vicomte de Vaux. He was appointed to the Great Council on December 17, 1631, Master of Requests on July 7, 1642, and President of the Great Council on April 11, 1644. He died December 25, 1650, leaving one child, who soon followed him to the tomb.

<sup>4</sup>A place of pilgrimage situated on a hill in the city of Saumur, Notre-Dame-des-Ardilliers numbers among its best known pilgrims Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint Louise de Marillac, Jean-Jacques Olier, Louis XIII, Richelieu, Madame de Montespan, and Saint Grignon de Montfort. Henriette, sister of Louis XIII and wife of Charles I, King of England, made her First Communion there.

362a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around December 1638]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You never tire of doing good things for us and do, I am afraid, more than you are able. I thank you most humbly, Mademoiselle, and beg you not to act in that way any more. It is enough for us and we shall always be indebted to you, no matter what we do to serve your son. Allow us then to serve him without any consideration other than our indebtedness to you and our eagerness to serve you and him as well.

Your letter seems fine to me and you would do well to send it to him. I pray Our Lord that it will be effective in causing him to make up his mind once and for all. I am sending his letter back to you with the one you wrote to him and shall try as soon as possible to have a little fireplace built for him in one of the small rooms. From now on we shall be having the ordinands at the Bons-Enfants and the room in which he now lives is needed for them.

If the weather is good and you can do so without any inconvenience, you may hear Holy Mass every day of your retreat. If not, honor the solitude of Our Lord completely, as Saint Magdalen did.

Please read the small [book], the *Imitation of Christ*, the book *On the Love of God* by the Bishop of Geneva<sup>2</sup> — around the sixth,

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**Letter 362a.** - The original autograph letter formerly belonged to the Daughters of Charity in the Parish of Saint-Projet in Bordeaux. It is now in the keeping of the Priests of the Missions at the Berceau, near Dax, and a photograph is filed in the Archives of the Mission (Paris). The letter, published in the *Annales* (1928), pp. 253-254, was reprinted in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, p. 18. The latter text has been used for this edition.

<sup>1</sup>Reference to the retreat for ordinands at the Bons-Enfants (December 1638 — cf. no. 364) prompts us to assign this date.

<sup>2</sup>Saint Francis de Sales.

seventh, or eighth book, at your choice — and some life of a saint according to your devotion.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

(On the reverse Saint Louise wrote: From Monsieur Vincent speaking of a retreat and of my son.)

**363. - TO BERNARD CODOING, IN RICHELIEU**

December 12, 1638

I am quite consoled on seeing the goodness of your heart in accepting the Luçon proposal against your own liking.<sup>1</sup> O Monsieur, that is what being a good Christian and a good Missionary is, overcoming one's own inclinations in that way! God has granted me today a very particular fondness for requesting of Him that same virtue of ever choosing the worst and that which is contrary to my own liking. But alas! Monsieur, how unfaithful I am to that practice! Please ask God to make me more exact to it in the future.

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**Letter 363.** - Reg. 2, p. 33.

<sup>1</sup>One of the clauses in the contract signed January 4, 1638, by Saint Vincent and the Cardinal-Minister, the former Bishop of Luçon, concerning the establishment of the Missionaries in Richelieu stated that three of the priests residing in the house were to give missions in the diocese of Luçon "four times a year at the most appropriate seasons and spend six weeks at this work each time." (Cf. no. 287, n. 3.) After due reflection, it was decided to establish a separate house in Luçon. Bernard Codoing, sounded out about being its Superior, accepted. But it may be that, for reasons of health, he did not take possession of his office. As a matter of fact, his name is not mentioned anywhere else in connection with Luçon. If he went there, he stayed a very short time, since on October 6, 1640, when Jacques Chiroye was sent to that town to direct the establishment entrusted to the Congregation of the Mission, it was to replace Gilbert Cuisnot.

364. - TO ANTOINE LUCAS, IN JOIGNY

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Here I am, back from Richelieu. I received one of your letters in that district and another here. Both of them reveal to me the blessing of God on your labors and the last one mentions the illness of Messieurs Renar and Mouton and how you were leaving for Joigny. I thank God for all that and pray that He will restore those gentlemen to perfect health.

We need Monsieur Mouton here. If his health allows, please send him back to us after the feast.

I saw the letter you wrote to the Commander,<sup>1</sup> which was also a great consolation to me, but I am not sure whether you have completed the mission in Cerisé.<sup>2</sup> The Commander is complaining that you have not. Please let me know how matters stand. The letter you wrote to Monsieur de la Salle also gave me great comfort, especially what you told him about continuing the discipline he maintained with the seminary during the mission they gave recently. That is where the backbone of the mission lies. I pray to God, Monsieur, that He will grant you the grace to act the same way.

But *mon Dieu!* Monsieur, how are Messieurs Pavillon, Renar, and Perrochel? Please take good care of them and of the health of the whole Company. You must not fail on Thursdays to give them some rest and some pleasant recreation, as far as can be done *inter privatos parietes*.<sup>3</sup> I most humbly greet those gentlemen and the whole Company and I am forwarding to M. Perrochel a package which was sent here for him. Please tell him that on his return we shall discuss what the nun who writes to him has told him.

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Letter 364. - Files of Turin, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The Commander de Sillery.

<sup>2</sup>Near Alençon, in Orne.

<sup>3</sup>*In private.*

Father de Gondi told me that all is not well with the Charity in Joigny. I entreat you, Monsieur, to ask Monsieur Pavillon to try to restore it to the best possible condition. He is experienced in the proper way to go about making a success of it, and he possesses the grace of God.

We have about seventy retreatants, five or six of whom have degrees and are very learned men, although in the Sorbonne complaints have been made about the method prescribed and the obligation for people of such status to take part in the exercises.<sup>4</sup> M. Hopille explains the Pontifical<sup>5</sup> and M. Hobier<sup>6</sup> gives the morning talk. Messieurs de la Salle, Dehorgny, Souffiers, Cuissot, and some of our young theologians are helping with the retreat. It is being held at the Bons-Enfants where things are working out better than we had dared to hope.

The rest of the house is well with the exception of M. Portail and M. de Rien who are beginning, however, to feel better.

The same thing is being done in Richelieu where I was greatly consoled on seeing the good which has come about in the town. I have never seen a people more attentive and devout at Holy Mass and they receive the sacraments often. There is no one leading a scandalous life. The townspeople seem to be living in peace and without division as they were before. The taverns are less frequented, almost not at all, especially during services and on Sundays and feast days. The Charity is doing very well. It has treated

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<sup>4</sup>The ordinance of the Archbishop of Paris dated from 1631 and had been put into effect for the first time during the Lenten season of that year. It prescribed that anyone wishing to be ordained in the diocese was to make a retreat with the Priests of the Mission the ten days preceding ordination. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXV, p. 119.)

<sup>5</sup>M. Hopille was the Vicar General of Agen. The Pontifical is the liturgical book which contains all the rites and ceremonies pertinent to a bishop. Knowledge of various details contained in it is necessary for priests as well.

<sup>6</sup>He translated the life of Agricola by Tacitus (1639) and Tertullian's treatises on patience and on prayer (1640). Balzac wrote to Chapelain on August 30, 1639, after reading the first of these works: "How much wisdom and common sense there is in M. Hobier! How well-regulated and pure his diction is! It seems to me that the definition of *Vir bonus dicendi peritus* [a good man, skilled in the art of language] is made for him." (Cf. *Lettres familières de Monsieur de Balzac à Monsieur Chapelain* [Paris, 1856], p. 375.)

sixty sick people since Easter without any of them dying except one young woman; before, there was no escaping it. The two sister servants of the poor whom we sent from here are working wonders there, one with the sick and the other teaching the girls.

I do not know whether we could station two of them in Joigny. Is Marie of the poor, who used to serve the poor of the Charity, still alive? Do all the little girls go to the school of the Sisters of Notre-Dame? What makes things more remarkable in Richelieu is that the people form a new group, the majority having been banished from their localities because of misconduct.<sup>7</sup>

There you have, Monsieur, all that I can tell you for the present, except that I ask you to write me every week concerning the state of the Company and its works. My most humble greetings to the pastors and to all who do me the honor of remembering me. I am in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, feast of Saint Lucy,<sup>8</sup> 1638

*Addressed:* Monsieur Lucas, Priest of the Mission, in Joigny

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<sup>7</sup>Words scratched out: M. Lambert was telling me that there are a great number of them.

<sup>8</sup>December 13.



365. - TO ROBERT DE SERGIS, IN TOULOUSE

Paris, December 17, 1638

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The day before yesterday I received your letter of the seventh of this month in which you informed me: (1) of M. Durot's arrival; (2) that you are afraid you displeased me; (3) that I should answer everything you ask me in your letters; (4) that they want you to give the examination in Saint-Michel;<sup>1</sup> (5) that they had you hear confessions in the suburbs; (6) that you are to be sent those who have dimissorial letters;<sup>2</sup> (7) that you want a small piece of the true cross which you left here; and (8) you told me you had bought an alarm clock. Here are the answers to all that, in the order presented.

(1) I thank God for M. Durot's arrival, and ask you to take care of his health and help him by word and example to arrive at the perfection of a Missionary. With that end in view, I ask both of you to observe the Little Rule without departing from it for any reason or under any pretext whatsoever. A prelate did me the honor of telling me that he saw you, with a larger collar than ours and a coat with big buttons, acting in a spirit of self-sufficiency and with less humility than the other Missionaries. If that is so, Monsieur, please adapt yourself in all things to the Little Rule, to our little observances, and to our manner of dressing, and honor more than ever the humility of Our Lord. Everyone says that the Missionary spirit is one of humility and simplicity; take hold of it. The spirit of meekness, simplicity, and humility is the spirit of Our Lord; that of pride will not last long in the Mission.

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**Letter 365.** - Files of Turin, seventeenth or eighteenth century copy.

<sup>1</sup>Saint-Michel is now part of the city of Toulouse. It appears that M. de Sergis had been requested to administer the examinations prescribed for ordinands before ordination.

<sup>2</sup>Dimissorial letters are statements giving a subject permission to be ordained by a bishop other than his own Ordinary (bishop). Exempt religious cannot be ordained by any bishop without the dimissorial letters from their own major Superior.

(2) Have no fear of having displeased me. I know you well. I am sure that you will never return a second time to the failings about which I have warned you and shall warn you hereafter. You are neither infallible nor incorrigible. You will fail less if you abide by what I have told you and shun the splendor and spirit of the world. *Nemo potest duobus dominis servire.*<sup>3</sup> I would like you to see the humility and simplicity Our Lord is diffusing among our seminarians and how shocking anything contrary to that spirit is to them.

(3) I promise you what you request in the third point, that from now on I shall answer all your questions, which you will please put down in list form.

Here are the answers to the fourth and fifth points. More perceptive people often tell me that we must hold to the practice of not preaching, catechizing, or hearing confessions in the cities and suburbs where there is an archbishopric or a presidial.<sup>4</sup> Besides, you know that our Bull is quite explicit about that point.<sup>5</sup> Those who might have some inclination to the contrary, seeing that they wish to do it, will be more edified in the course of time.

I do not find any difficulty at all in your seeing those whom the Bishop<sup>6</sup> will send to you about dimissorial letters when you are in Toulouse, and I think you did well to buy an alarm clock.

A mishap which occurred in the Company has made it clear to me that I need to examine the accounts of expenses and receipts. I examined and closed them in Richelieu, from which I have just come. Please send me yours, Monsieur, or if you have not kept any account of your expenses and receipts, begin to do so for the future, so that one and the same order will be observed every-

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<sup>3</sup>*No one can serve two masters.* Mt. 6:24.

<sup>4</sup>A type of tribunal created by Henri II in 1552; it was an appeals court between a local court and a higher court or parlement.

<sup>5</sup>"But in towns and cities which have the title of archbishopric, bishopric, parliamentary, and bailiwick, the clerics and priests of the said Congregation shall perform no public function of their Institute." (Cf. *Bull Salvatoris Nostris* of January 12, 1633, vol. XIII, no. 81.)

<sup>6</sup>Charles de Montchal (1628-1651).

where. You may be assured that I recognize your fidelity and distrust my own more than yours.

I am on my way to tell M. de Marceille to look for and send to you the relic of the true cross you requested, if it can be found.

Well now, Monsieur, that is all. It remains for me to tell you that I would have taken good care to come and see you in Toulouse, or to ask you to come to Bordeaux, if I had gone there. *O Jésus!* Monsieur, I am most anxious to have the consolation of seeing you. You know how much my heart treasures your own which is so dearly lovable. I promised M. Pavillon that I would come to Alet immediately after his arrival there.<sup>7</sup> If Our Lord grants me the grace of seeing him, it will be then that I shall have that consolation. But if an opportunity that I foresee does not induce me to make a trip to Gascogne,<sup>8</sup> I shall have the pleasure of seeing you sooner. In the meantime, I greet you with all the affection in my power. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Monsieur de Sergis, Priest of the Mission, in Toulouse

365a. - G. PLUYETTE TO SAINT VINCENT

*Monsieur,*

*Since I cannot come to Paris, please give the six . . . owed to me by reason of the scholarship received as a favor from cousin Etienne Plu-*

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<sup>7</sup>Nicolas Pavillon, although named Bishop of Alet in 1637, was not consecrated until August 22, 1639. He did not go to his diocese until September 1639; therefore, Saint Vincent was unable to keep his promise.

<sup>8</sup>This journey did not take place.

**Letter 365a.** - Autograph letter. The original is in the Arch. Nat., M 105 (Collège des Bons-Enfants). This edition follows the text published in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, p. 17.

*yette; they fell due on Christmas Day. I shall be much obliged, I who am,  
Monsieur, your most humble servant.*

*G. Pluyette*

*Fontenay, December 25, 1638*

**366. - TO PIERRE DU CHESNE, IN SANCEY<sup>1</sup>**

[January 8, 1639]<sup>2</sup>

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I cannot tell you how much the consolation which your letter gave me has allayed the pain of hearing about good Monsieur Dufestel's illness. I thank God for both pieces of news, certainly not without rebuking my miserable feelings which are revolting against the acceptance I wish to give God's adorable Will. I am writing to him and asking him to do all he can and to spare nothing for his medical care. I entreat you, Monsieur, to be sure that he does so and, for that purpose, see that the doctor visits him every day and that he lacks no remedy or nourishment. Oh! how I hope the Company will provide for his needs with a holy extravagance! I would be delighted if word were sent to me from somewhere that someone in the Company had sold chalices for that purpose.

And what shall I tell you about the mission in Saint-Lyé?<sup>3</sup> Postpone it, with the Bishop's<sup>4</sup> consent, until he is entirely cured and restored to his former health. There will be no harm, however,

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**Letter 366.** - Collection for the process of beatification.

<sup>1</sup>The Missionaries' place of residence in the diocese of Troyes.

<sup>2</sup>The copy from the process of beatification is not dated. We cannot accept the date suggested in the Avignon manuscript (January 8, 1649) because in 1649 François Dufestel was no longer a member of the Company. The content of this letter and particularly its close relationship to no. 368 lead us to conclude that it was written in 1639. For the day and the month we can trust the Avignon manuscript.

<sup>3</sup>A small place in the arrondissement of Troyes.

<sup>4</sup>René de Breslay, Bishop of Troyes (1604-1641).

in your going to visit the people and having them approve the delay until the mission can be given conveniently.

Well now, so you are worried like Martha, on account of the love you have for Monsieur Dufestel and the whole Company. I pray Our Lord to watch over and work with you in recovering the health of this servant of His.

I send my regards to good Monsieur Savary<sup>5</sup> and our Brother René,<sup>6</sup> and I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL  
i.s.C.M.

*Addressed:* Monsieur du Chesne, Priest of the Mission, in Sancey

367. - TO PIERRE DU CHESNE, IN SANCEY

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Last night I received your most recent letter in which you told me about the state of Monsieur Dufestel's illness and what orders the doctor gave for him. I thank you most humbly for being so mindful to let me know about it so promptly and exactly, and for

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<sup>5</sup>Pierre Savary was born in Neuville-Vitasse (Pas-de-Calais) and entered the Congregation of the Mission on August 16, 1637, at the age of thirty-one. He left, then returned, and made his vows in Amécy in 1659.

<sup>6</sup>There were two Brothers in the Congregation of the Mission named René: René Bisson and René Perdreau. The former was born in Nantes in the diocese of Sées around November 1, 1600. He entered the seminary in Paris on November 5, 1636, and pronounced his vows October 18, 1646 (*Notices*, vol. V, p. 66). René Perdreau was born in 1592 in the diocese of Maillezais and entered the seminary in Paris on November 9, 1637 (*Notices*, vol. I, p. 494).

**Letter 367.** - Collection for the process of beatification.

all the care you are giving him. I beg Our Lord to be your reward and the perfect healing of our patient whose illness is not serious, I hope. But I entreat you, Monsieur, as always, to spare nothing for him. That type of illness does not need remedies so much as patience, gentleness, and cheerfulness of mind. I hope Our Lord will give him a share in all those virtues and that he will make good use of them.

If the doctor thinks it might be necessary to give him some remedies that would require his presence more frequently than he can give them to him in Sancey, could you not get him a room in the suburbs? And that being the case, would he be better cared for there? I do not think his type of sickness is that kind at all. In any case, look into it and confer with the doctor with whom M. Dufestel thinks it would be proper. Finally, Monsieur, please do for him what you would want to do for Our Lord. In fact, the goodness and charity you have in his regard, you are showing to Our Lord and, at the same time, to our whole Little Company and to me in particular, who am suffering in him as Our Lord knows. I embrace him in spirit with all the affection in my power and most humbly greet good Monsieur Savary. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, [January 28, 1639]<sup>1</sup>

*Addressed:* Monsieur du Chesne, Priest of the Mission, in Sancey

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<sup>1</sup>This is the date suggested by Brother Chollier in his deposition at the process of beatification. We prefer it to the one given by the copyist of the letter (January 28, 1634), because in 1634 Messieurs du Chesne and Savary were not yet members of the Congregation, M. Dufestel was not a priest, and the Priests of the Mission had no residence in Sancey.

368. - TO ROBERT DE SERGIS, IN TOULOUSE

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Here is the answer to three of your letters, one dated the fourth, another the ninth, and another the seventeenth, which I received two or three days ago. The first did not give me any indication that you wanted an answer so quickly, nor it seems did the second; the third undoubtedly did.

I shall begin then by telling you, with regard to your good relatives, that I sent someone purposely to visit them; they are all well and recommend themselves to you and your prayers. Therefore, please be at peace in that regard.

The prelate I mentioned to you<sup>1</sup> did not tell me anything else except the three things about which I wrote to you and of which I have forgotten the third: about your collar, the buttons on your coat, and, if I am not mistaken, the third was your way of acting, which was not quite in keeping with the simplicity and humility of a Missionary. I am sending you a collar; you can have yours altered to match it. However little we may wish to follow the world as regards our clothing, such things show that we have some small fragment of this desire in our hearts and, if we are not careful, we shall let ourselves be carried away by the spirit of the world. To say that we shall be taken for others — it is pride and vanity of spirit to change our appearance because of that. O Monsieur, those who would truly know Jesus Christ crucified would be very glad to pass, as He did, for the least of men, indeed for the worst, not only as regards personal actions, but even with respect to those of our state! Why, what good will it do us to possess humility with regard to our person if we take pride in our state! O Monsieur, who will grant us the grace to put ourselves in the last

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Letter 368. - Archives of the Mission (Paris), original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>An unnamed prelate mentioned in no. 365.

place among men and to keep ourselves there according to the condition of our person and our vocation! If we wish to prefer ourselves to others and to have things which distinguish us from them, be assured, Monsieur, that Our Lord will allow us to fall into such confusion that we shall be a subject of contempt both for them and for everyone. I believe this truth just as I believe that I shall have to die.

I am telling you this in answer to something you wrote me shortly after your return to Toulouse. I have perfect confidence that you will think well of it and hold firm to the little practices and maxims you have seen here. I take care not to ask anyone whomsoever how you act or what you look like. I want everyone to know I still have the good opinion of you that I had when you were assigned to the duty Providence has given you. And what is more I believe, as I told you above, that, even though you thought differently than we about some little matter, the same angel who made Saint Francis Xavier so exact in the observance of what he had seen in the Company and so careful about learning anything new that was introduced here, so as to do the same thing there, the same angel, I repeat, will do the same for you. Oh! I consider that as beyond doubt.

What you told me, Monsieur, about good Monsieur Durot is true but, since he has a good heart and sound judgment, I trust he will be a very fine Missionary someday. He has a gentle spirit. Please, Monsieur, treat him the same way. I made a journey with three Discalced Carmelites without being able to tell which one was the Superior, until I asked about it after being with them for three days, because the Superior so truly lived with the others in goodness, gentleness, condescension, and humility, and the others lived with him in confidence and simplicity. O Monsieur! who will grant us such a spirit!

As for the confessions in the suburbs, I think that, although we are not permitted to hear confessions there, we could do so a quarter of a league from there if there were a chapel, even though the penitents were from the parish in the suburb.



You may be assured, Monsieur, as regards the expenses, that it has never entered my mind that there was any fault to be found with you. *O Jésus!* never has that thought occurred to me, much less become part of me. What I said to you about it was said to preserve order and assure the Company's carrying out of the practice for centuries to come. The method, as M. Durot can tell you, will be the one M. Codoing used to follow. If you think it is too time consuming, put down fewer details. Moreover, I think a superior does well to have a companion relieve him of temporal matters.

As for the journey to Toulouse, I am committed to making it when the Bishop of Alet goes there, but he is not ready to do so. Neither he, nor fifteen or eighteen other appointed Bishops have received their Bulls as yet. As soon as he receives them, however, he intends to leave.

It will soon be three months that I have been working at the mission in Joigny with M. Perrochel. Monsieur Renar was there, too. He came back ill with M. Mouton.

I praise God that the end of the mission in Vernon<sup>2</sup> was more to your liking than the beginning, and I pray that He will grant you the grace to hold to the spirit of gentleness and humility Our Lord has given you. Bitterness has never served any purpose but to embitter. Saint Vincent Ferrer says that there is no means of profiting by preaching if one does not preach from the depths of compassion. *Bon Dieu!* and what a way to conquer spirits such as you describe — by the same spirit! If we combat the devil with a spirit of pride and self-sufficiency, we shall never overcome him, for he has more pride and self-sufficiency than we. But if we act against him with humility, we shall conquer him, because he has none of those weapons nor would he know how to defend himself from them. That is what Saint Dominic told some doctors from Spain who had come to his assistance against the Albigenses,<sup>3</sup> with

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<sup>2</sup>Vernon-lès-Joyeuse, in the diocese of Viviers.

<sup>3</sup>A sect, centered in Albi, France, between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, which

whom they were behaving in a spirit of self-sufficiency. I truly pray to God that He will grant you the grace to act in that spirit in Muret where you are going. As for the Charity you intend to set up there, here is the rule customarily used in the parishes of Paris; you can give it to the towns. For the villages, please hold on to the one that has been used up to the present. I set aside the one you sent me; its author has withdrawn and is now the Pastor in Etiolles.<sup>4</sup>

M. Codoing is on a mission; he would not be able to have his sermons copied for you. You will have to wait for the summer when he comes home, at which time you can have them copied and perhaps printed just for the Company.

The Penitentiary<sup>5</sup> feels that neither case of conscience which you submitted is permissible and Father Rebardeau is of the same opinion with regard to hearing the confessions of penitents from the dioceses surrounding the mission area. I do not remember the second case at all; I submitted it only to the Penitentiary whose judgment, as I told you, was in the negative.

Here is my answer to your last letter. You may give an écu or two to the Charity in Muret if you establish it. As for the manner of conferring with the priest in Muret according to the Archbishop's wish, M. Durot can tell you the method M. Codoing followed for the meetings in Dauphiné. As for the topics of the conferences, you could suggest none more useful than those for the ordinands — which you have — for example, with regard to censures: (1) say that it is important for priests to know the teaching concerning censures; (2) what the teaching is on censures; and (3) the means to be used to release people who have incurred the said censures. Now, you could divide the second point into several conferences as, for example, censures in general and then each

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professed heretical doctrines about the divinity of Christ and the means of salvation. The attempts of the Church to combat this heresy gave rise to the Inquisition.

<sup>4</sup>In Essonne.

<sup>5</sup>A priest whom a bishop has vested with power to resolve special cases normally reserved to the bishop alone.

one in particular. But in order to do that effectively, the person who presides, or you, should state the teaching and the others should repeat what you have said or, at least, some of them in turn. True, to do it well, it would be advisable for each one at the meeting to have your writings or, at least, every two. That not being the case, you will have to let them study the topics you present and give back as best they can what they remember — unless you have some better method.

That is really it this time; I have written this letter in three or four different sittings.

Our little news is: first, that M. Dufestel and his family in Troyes are working with great blessings, but he recently became ill. Messieurs Pavillon, Renar, Perrochel, and six men from the Company [have been working] in Joigny since Advent. They are now in the villages where it will take them about another month. Three or four men are about to leave for the parishes belonging to Malta in the grand priory of France. Commander de Sillery has given a fund of three thousand livres income for them and one thousand for Troyes. Messieurs du Coudray<sup>6</sup> and Boucher have forty poor people, some sick, some others who are healthy, to whom they minister in their house, although it is small, because they have no hospital. They also attend to 150 outside the city, all of whom they feed and assist with a charity that brings tears to the eyes of those who hear of it. However, it is greatly to be feared they will collapse. The former enjoined me, after I had sent him word to take care of his body and the little bit of money we sent him, either to help him, recall him, or let him die with those poor people. If I can, I shall send you the letter M. Boucher, in his simplicity, wrote to me about the situation.

Our young men are asking to do what you and I did. I think the seminary is made up of more than twenty, although we withdrew ten or twelve of them either to study Theology at the Bons-Enfants

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<sup>6</sup>He was Superior at the house in Toul at that time.

or to work on the missions. Our good Brother Alméras,<sup>7</sup> who is an outstanding subject, has done as we did and is about to go to the Bons-Enfants to study.

Such is the news from us at present. I hope to have some from you often [and] more time to write to you; I shall do so as often as I can. In spirit I embrace good Monsieur Durot, whom I ask to forgive me in case I cannot send him an answer. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, February 3, 1639

God has taken M. Durot's mother. Please take an opportune moment to tell him. I just ordered some Masses said for her intention. I beg Our Lord to be the solace for his heart's suffering.

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<sup>7</sup>René Alméras, Madame Goussault's nephew, was born in Paris on February 5, 1613. A Councillor in the Great Council at the age of twenty-four, he left everything, his family, position, and hopes, in spite of the opposition of his father, who was to follow him later, to enter the Congregation of the Mission, where he was received December 24, 1637. He was ordained a priest at Easter, 1639.

Saint Vincent entrusted important positions to him, such as Director of the Seminary and Assistant of the house. He admitted him to his council and often relied on his prudence to deal with people on the outside in delicate matters, and he also gave him charge of the retreatants. So much work ruined René Alméras' health. The Holy Founder, convinced by personal experience that a change of air could contribute to restoring a person to health, sent him in 1646 to visit several houses in France and Italy. When he reached Rome, René Alméras was notified that he had been appointed Superior of the house. He stayed there until 1651. On his return to France he took over the direction of Saint Charles Seminary. In 1654 we find him engaged in distributing relief to the poor of Picardy and Champagne. He again visited several houses of the Congregation and once again became Assistant of the Motherhouse, in which position he remained until the death of Saint Vincent. He was also Visitor of the Province of Poitou. He was in Richelieu when the Saint, realizing that his death was near, begged him to return to Paris immediately. René Alméras was ill, but he came, carried on a stretcher, and had the consolation of receiving a last blessing from the Saint. Appointed Vicar General by Saint Vincent, then Superior General by the Assembly of 1661, he wisely governed the two Communities, the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity, until September 2, 1672, the day of his death.

In this letter, Saint Vincent calls M. Alméras "Brother," the customary title given to clerical students.

I thought it would be better for you to tell him and for me not to mention it to him at all in my letter.

*Addressed:* Monsieur de Sergis, Priest of the Mission, in Toulouse

369. - TO PIERRE DU CHESNE, IN SANCEY

[Around February 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You cannot give more consolation to my soul by anything in this world than by the charity you exercise toward good Monsieur Dufestel. I thank you most humbly for the frequent news you give me of him and beg you to continue for the love of Jesus Christ Who impels you. Well, we must wait, Monsieur, for nature to free itself slowly of the disturbance oppressing it. I must confess that I agree with the doctor attending him. That type of illness cannot be hurried. I trust that the Divine Doctor Himself will be his cure, if not overnight, at least little by little. I embrace him in spirit with heartfelt tenderness.

I am writing Monsieur Gouault<sup>2</sup> that, according to the wish of the Bishop of Troyes,<sup>3</sup> I am trying to sell his houses and shall lose no time.

I wrote to Messieurs Lucas and Perceval<sup>4</sup> asking them to go and see you as I told you I would.

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**Letter 369.** - Collection for the process of beatification.

<sup>1</sup>This letter is closely connected with nos. 366 and 367, which it must have followed by a few days. M. Pémartin dates it February 15, but his reason for doing so is not known.

<sup>2</sup>Sébastien Gouault was a middle-class gentleman of Troyes. He lent his house in Sancey to the Priests of the Mission, who lived in it for almost two years.

<sup>3</sup>René de Breslay.

<sup>4</sup>Guillaume Perceval, born in Saint-Guillain in the diocese of Cambrai, entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1635, was ordained a priest in 1637, and left the Company in 1644.

The Bishop of Beauvais,<sup>5</sup> realizing the importance of the ordinands' retreat, has requested the neighboring bishops who will be conferring orders to send back to Paris those from the other archbishoprics who studied there, so that they might profit by the retreat here. Accordingly, I think the Bishop of Troyes would do them good were he to act likewise with regard to the externs. In that case, if his Excellency were notified, perhaps he would do the same. Act as you and Monsieur Dufestel judge proper and send us that good woodcutter and vinedresser,<sup>6</sup> if he has completely made up his mind. The men from Champagne give us great cause for satisfaction.

I embrace good Monsieur Dufestel and I am for Monsieur Savary, René,<sup>7</sup> and him the most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Monsieur du Chesne, Priest of the Mission, in Sancey

### 370. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I do not know if I told you the day before yesterday that the Bishop of Beauvais is supposed to come and get me this morning. I am going to Beauvais for a week or so. I commend myself, meanwhile, to your prayers. Please take care of your health and preserve it for His holy service. I am going to pray to Him to do so

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<sup>5</sup>Augustin Potier.

<sup>6</sup>This might be Edmond Picardat, a coadjutor brother born on April 23, 1613, in Rumilly-lès-Vaudes (Aube). He entered the Congregation of the Mission on October 5, 1639, and made his vows on January 1, 1643.

<sup>7</sup>Either Brother René Bisson or Brother René Perdreau.

**Letter 370.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), original autograph letter.

until you are able to send your little Sisters to work at the Charity in the country.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

371. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Here are three poor people from Lorraine who arrived yesterday evening. One woman has a child. We shall have to try to get her placed at the Refuge<sup>2</sup> and perhaps the old woman, too. Please send them to Madame de Herse after you have seen them, if she approves of their staying at the Foundlings in Saint-Victor in the meantime. I am a little rushed and cannot write to her about it.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Tuesday, at ten o'clock

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, close to N[otre-] D[ame]

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**Letter 371.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), copy made from the original letter.

<sup>1</sup>After 1639 the Saint would have written the words "Tuesday, at ten o'clock" at the beginning of the letter, not at the end. Also, according to Abelly (cf. *op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXXV, p. 164), it was precisely in 1639 that he began to look after the poor of Lorraine, who had been driven from their homes by war and poverty.

<sup>2</sup>The Refuge was ordinarily a place of involuntary shelter for women and girls who were judged to be living a disorderly life.

372. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1636 and 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I praise God for everything you told me about Saint-Nicolas.<sup>2</sup> I shall submit the matter concerning the galley slaves<sup>3</sup> to the wife of the Keeper of the Seals,<sup>4</sup> and to Madame Goussault the business concerning the house, and I shall give you an answer about them.

As for Catherine,<sup>5</sup> I feel you do not know her well yet. We shall talk about it.

Today is the day I am going to La Chapelle after dinner with Mademoiselle Poulaillon and three or four other people. It is better to wait until next Saturday when I have to go there for the wife of the Keeper of the Seals.

May God be blessed that you have a great deal of money! He will give us other young women when He chooses.

Marguerite from Saint-Paul came here yesterday to tell me that her Pastor<sup>6</sup> sent for her and asked how they live, what their spiritual exercises are, and who directs them. He wants to direct them, wishing them to depend entirely on him. She added that she is nonetheless quite ready to leave everything whenever we wish. I

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**Letter 372.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Dates of the establishment of the Daughters of Charity in La Chapelle and the death of Madame Goussault.

<sup>2</sup>Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.

<sup>3</sup>The matter might be the Cornuel legacy. Claude Cornuel left a legacy of six thousand livres income for the assistance of the galley slaves (cf. vol. II, no. 426.)

<sup>4</sup>Madame Séguier.

<sup>5</sup>Sister Catherine Bagard. She was later placed at the hospital of Nantes when the Daughters of Charity began that establishment. By her erratic conduct, her bad disposition, and the imperfections of her character, she caused her Superiors and her companions a lot of trouble. She eventually left the Community.

<sup>6</sup>Nicolas Mazure. He was a very zealous Pastor, but his zeal was spoiled by his jealous and cantankerous disposition.



told her to tell him everything, to conceal nothing from him, and then we shall see.

It will be very difficult to keep these individuals in the state necessary for things to go well. The ones at Saint-Sauveur, since their rebellion, are no longer as zealous and complain a great deal. In time they will realize the harm they are doing.

I see the evils I do and do not mend my ways. Please pray for that intention.

I am, in His love, your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

373. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1639]<sup>1</sup>

I got ready to come and see you this morning and shall do so if I can, but in case I cannot and you can get the carriage you mentioned to me, please stop by here tomorrow morning around eight o'clock, if your health permits. If not, send me word and I shall come to visit you at your house.

I see very well that Madame Goussault did not make clear to you what I told her about your son. I told her that the Pastor of Saint-Nicolas<sup>2</sup> received him without a title,<sup>3</sup> which is an exceptional favor, and for fear that some difficulty might arise on that account, it is wise for you to have him ready. However, your son has in no way changed his mind, as far as I know.

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**Letter 373.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter, written before Madame Goussault's death, seems to be from the same year as no. 393, whose date can be assigned with more certainty.

<sup>2</sup>Georges Froger.

<sup>3</sup>Ordinands were required to have either a clerical title, that is an ecclesiastical benefice, or a patrimonial title of at least one hundred livres revenue.

We really need to meet as soon as possible about the Sisters at Saint-Sulpice.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

374. - TO THE COMMUNITY  
OF SAINT-NICOLAS-DU-CHARDONNET

Saint-Lazare, April 29, 1639

Monsieur,

The Missionaries accept Monsieur Bourdoise's proposal with all possible humility and respect and offer him what he requests,<sup>1</sup> on the one hand, with great embarrassment because they are unworthy of the grace Monsieur Bourdoise is conferring on them by his presence and, on the other, with confidence that he will bear with their faults and be of infinite benefit to them by his good example. They also ask him, for the love of Our Lord, to receive one of their Company into the Community of Saint-Nicolas for a period of time, under whatever condition he may choose.

VINCENT DEPAUL

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**Letter 374.** - Coste published this letter according to the text given in Pémartin (vol. I, pp. 247-248) who, without indicating his source, had extracted his material from ms. 2453 of the Bibliothèque Mazarine: *La vie du vénérable serviteur de Dieu, Messire Adrien Bourdoise*. . . . The text of the manuscript was later published in the *Annales* (1952), pp. 230-231. Although there is little variance in the three versions, the manuscript bears the additional words: "Drawn up at Saint-Lazare the next to last day of April, one thousand six hundred thirty-nine. Vincent de Paul." Furthermore, Coste indicated Adrien Bourdoise as the recipient of the letter, citing Pémartin. However, this present edition follows the indication given in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, p. 20, and cites the letter as addressed to the Community of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.

<sup>1</sup>Adrien Bourdoise had undoubtedly asked to come and make a retreat at Saint-Lazare.

374a. - GUILLAUME COMPAING TO SAINT VINCENT

[May 5, 1639]<sup>1</sup>

The priests of the Community of Saint-Nicolas, having seriously examined the proposal and concession<sup>2</sup> above and considered the whole of it maturely, praised M. Bourdoise for his fervor and great desire to advance in virtue, indeed, to render himself more suitable for the establishment of the seminary and of the community. In the same way, they also recognize the continuation of the benefits, favors, and kindnesses which the gentlemen of the Mission have bestowed on them at all times, for which they are most grateful. In return for this, they accept the man or men whom the gentlemen of the Mission choose to send to Saint-Nicolas and to whom the Community may be of use in any way whatever. And moreover, they offer them anything they feel the Community can do for their good.

As for the carrying out of the aforesaid proposal, the priests of the Community have humbly requested M. Bourdoise, their dear confrere and honored treasurer, to be content with making a visit to Saint-Lazare, be it for one or several days, without its being apparent or serving as a precedent for M. N. or others, and to communicate from there with the said seminary, according as the gentlemen of the Mission will be pleased to permit.

*Drawn up in the assembly Room of the Community, the . . .*

GUILLAUME COMPAING<sup>3</sup>

Priest and Secretary of the same

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**Letter 374a.** - Copy made from ms. 2453 of the Bibliothèque Mazarine. This letter is the response to no. 374. The text was published in the *Annales* (1952), p. 231 and reprinted in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, p. 21.

<sup>1</sup>Courtin, the author of ms. 2453 and a contemporary of Adrien Bourdoise, assigned the date to this letter which is the response to no. 374.

<sup>2</sup>M. Bourdoise wanted to resign from his office in the Community of Saint-Nicolas. He wanted to retire to Saint-Lazare for a rather long time. Saint Vincent admitted him to a retreat and arranged to send him back to his Community.

<sup>3</sup>One of the first members of the Community of Saint-Nicolas. He died in 1656.

375. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Saint-Lazare, Wednesday, at noon  
[Between September 1638 and September 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

We acted upon your judgment concerning the Foundlings: the work will be joined to that of the Hôtel-Dieu if the Ladies approve. Consequently, we shall have the same officers we need for each of the works, with the exception of a treasurer.

I cannot understand what you told me about the little girls.

Since you think Nicole may have mended her ways, fine; try her again, and try Henriette in Saint-Germain.<sup>2</sup> However, I think you should allow a few days to go by before you do it.

M. de Cordes has not yet come back from the country. When he does, I shall speak to him about that good married woman.

I am going to Grigny to see Madame Goussault, the President's wife, and Madame Le Roux at her retreat. I hope to be here next Saturday for a little meeting on Sunday.

Please do what you can to stay well, for the love of Our Lord.

I am in His love, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

The Chancellor's wife<sup>3</sup> gave me three écus for a goat. I seem to remember that Mademoiselle du Mée is the one to whom we are supposed to give them. It is for the foundlings.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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**Letter 375.** - The original autograph was made available to Coste by M. Honoré Bouquillard, a notary in Nevers.

<sup>1</sup>Reference to the beginning of the work with the Foundlings (1638) and to Madame Goussault, who died on September 20, 1639, prompts us to assign the dates between which this letter was written.

<sup>2</sup>Henriette Gesseume was to be sent to Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

<sup>3</sup>Madame Séguier.

376. - TO LOUIS LEBRETON,<sup>1</sup> IN ROME

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Yesterday evening I received your letters of the fourth and twelfth of last month. The first relieved me of the great anxiety I was suffering lest my package, whose receipt you acknowledged in your letter of the fourth, had been lost. May God be blessed that it has not and may He also be blessed for what you told me in your letters! Here is the reply to all your points.

(1) I praise God for the permission you obtained to hear confessions and for the use you are making of it with regard to the poor, the prisoners, and the people of the countryside.

(2) I admire that Congregation's<sup>2</sup> care for the missions and I pray the sovereign Shepherd and Master of the missions to draw glory from it. Is there any harm in your just simply telling them about the one here? Could you not by that means get an establishment for that purpose? I wrote to you about the little chapel outside the Vatican. It is more tempting to me than the parish. What if you were to offer to scour the countryside for His Holiness or some bishop? I would send you someone from the Company to go with you. I spoke to you about Cardinal Bagni,<sup>3</sup> because I consider him one of the greatest prelates in the Church. I have a very deep affection for him and for serving him. He told me long ago that he would do us the honor of making use of us. I have never had a picture of any prelate except of him. His wisdom, his

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**Letter 376.** - Collection for the process of beatification.

<sup>1</sup>Louis Lebreton was born in Saint-Jean-sur-Erve (Mayenne) in 1591. He entered the Congregation of the Mission on May 8, 1638, and was sent to Rome at the beginning of 1639 to further the affairs of the Company at the Roman Court, especially the question of the vows. He gave several missions in the Roman countryside, where he was very successful. His career as a Missionary was short but full. He died in Rome, October 17, 1641. The biographical notes dedicated to him in volume II of the *Notices*, pp. 205-222, do not give any details other than those contained in Saint Vincent's correspondence.

<sup>2</sup>The Propaganda.

<sup>3</sup>Giovanni Francesco Guidi di Bagno, the former Nuncio in France (1627-1630).

goodness, and the affection with which he honored our Little Company here have been for me the image of God's wisdom, His goodness, and the regard with which His Divine Majesty so kindly honors our Little Company.

(3) What shall I say to you about the way to act with those priests on the mission, except that charity and candor should always hold the upper hand and that the mentality of the country calls for caution.

(4) You are right in not eating out and in accepting remuneration for the Mass. In the meantime, there is humility in acting thus and prudence in living that way until you are known, but I think you would do well to distribute the remuneration to the poor.

(5) I am waiting anxiously, not to say impatiently, for the reactions to your mission and the way it is accepted on your return.

(6) Guillard<sup>4</sup> was born of a Catholic father and mother. He is the one who fell into heresy and remained in it for three years. Now he is one of the most fervent men in the Company. We have sent him to Lorraine to assist the poor corporally and spiritually; he is the sixth one. He is not yet forty years old and is neither a doctor nor a nobleman. Does not the work he is doing in Lorraine merit an *extra tempora*?<sup>5</sup> Monsieur Parisos obtained one for Lescar who has none of these three qualifications.

(7) The church in Richelieu has Notre-Dame as its title or patron.<sup>6</sup>

(8) I shall repay the one hundred livres and the exchange for Monsieur Marchand's<sup>7</sup> security here or I shall send it by Monsieur Lumague<sup>8</sup> if I do not receive instructions as to whom to give it here.

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<sup>4</sup>Except for what Saint Vincent writes here, no reference to Guillard, a cleric, can be found, either in Coste or in the *Notices*. It would appear that he did not persevere in the Congregation.

<sup>5</sup>Privilege of being ordained on days other than those fixed by Canonical regulations.

<sup>6</sup>The Bishop of Poitiers had established the parish in Richelieu by a decree dated May 27, 1638, and Urban VIII had given his approval, but certain difficulties delayed the recording of the Bull at the registry of ecclesiastical appointments in Poitou until 1645.

<sup>7</sup>A wealthy banker with whom Saint Vincent often transacted business.

<sup>8</sup>André Lumague, one of the most important bankers of the time, to whom Marie de Médicis

(9) As for the Toul affair, we are in the midst of a lawsuit<sup>9</sup> here. I shall try to send you the documents you requested; we need them for evidence. I shall see if I can have a copy of them put together.

(10) With regard to the Saint-Lazare matter, we were established by a decree of the Parlement.<sup>10</sup> The Archbishop of Paris always had the power of appointment. At the last vacancy, there was one person who received a commission from the King and another from the Archbishop; he is the Prior today, but that stopped with him. It is true that this was effected by an agreement between President Janin, who requested it of the King, and Monsieur Le Bret, the State Councillor,<sup>11</sup> who obtained it for the Prior<sup>12</sup> from the Archbishop of Paris. Since then, to strengthen himself against his commission or the *ad nutum* dismissal provision, the Prior has had a letter of appointment sent from Rome. Outside of that, no other person has ever held a letter of appointment that I know of, except some bishops of Paris. Moreover, those were commissions *ad nutum*, and the Prior used to give an account to the Bishop of Paris every year.

What if you wrote to Monsieur Gilioli to apologize if you have not gone to see him? I told you I would be very happy if you would stop in Ferrara to see him, to assure him that he still holds the same place of esteem and affection in the Company's heart as before, and to give him news of us.

It is considered doubtful here that the privileged altar His Holiness so kindly granted us for Saint-Lazare is valid, because it sometimes happens, though rarely, that only three or four Masses

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and Cardinal Richelieu had recourse more than once. In 1616 he was charged with negotiating the purchase of the principality of Monaco for the Queen, but he failed in that mission.

<sup>9</sup>See no. 293, n. 1.

<sup>10</sup>The decree of the Parlement for the recording of the Letters Patent confirming the contract of union of Saint-Lazare was dated September 7, 1632. The Holy See had given its approval March 15, 1635, but the Bulls were not sent until April 18, 1655. The prelates of the Roman Court, in spite of the proofs furnished by Saint Vincent, were still reluctant in 1639 to believe that the conferring of the priory depended on the Archbishop of Paris.

<sup>11</sup>Julien Le Bret, Seigneur de Flacourt, Counselor in the Parlement in 1635, then State Councillor, died in April 1688.

<sup>12</sup>Adrien Le Bon.

are said there in one day. I repeat, rarely. Nevertheless, we think it would be well for His Holiness to be so kind as to decrease the number from seven Masses a day to three or four. Please discuss this.

I sent your indulgences to Jouy. I shall say nothing about your business for now, I mean the one for which you went, except that, all things carefully thought out and weighed, I think you should aim at complete establishment, for reasons that I shall tell you. Here is a very urgent one. I have just now seen a member of the Company, one of the best of all, among the most devoted, and a very gentle spirit. Nevertheless, he has been determined for about a week now to leave. He has not given me any particular reason for it, no matter what remonstrance, entreaty, or humiliation I have been able to use with him. And what is the most strange is that his vocation seems to come entirely from God. He is an excellent example to the Company and has confirmed his membership in it the way several individuals and older members have done, as you know, that is, by vows.<sup>13</sup>

After that example, I would not know anyone of whom we could be sure. I am not giving you his name, because I have not yet told this to anyone here.

With the help of Our Lord, we have undertaken the assistance of the poor people in Lorraine<sup>14</sup> and have sent Messieurs Bécu and

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<sup>13</sup>We cannot guarantee the exactitude of these last two words. The copy is illegible.

<sup>14</sup>War, plague, and famine were wreaking havoc on the unfortunate inhabitants of Lorraine. Bands of brigands were multiplying to such an extent that the village people had to seek refuge in the fortified towns. The fields lay fallow and food prices were prohibitive. Almost eighty small towns and villages were emptied of all their inhabitants. A woman was known to kill and eat her mother, and young women to slaughter children and feed on their flesh. In several places, human flesh had become food. Religious women had to emigrate like the others, so as not to die of hunger. A good number of people from Lorraine came to Paris, counting on fighting destitution more easily there. "To be able to describe a similar state of desolation," wrote Digot, "one would have to go back to the war of the Jews against the Romans and to the sack of Jerusalem by the soldiers of Titus." (Cf. Auguste Digot, *Histoire de la Lorraine* [2nd ed., 5 vols., Nancy: G. Crépin-Leblond, 1880], vol. V, p. 277.) Saint Vincent's heart was touched by so much suffering. He begged everywhere for the poor people of Lorraine, at Court, in the palaces, in middle-class homes. He sent his priests and brothers to them with bread, clothes, tools, and money. He offered safe shelter to young girls and religious women,



Rondet,<sup>15</sup> and Brothers Guillard, Aulent,<sup>16</sup> Baptiste,<sup>17</sup> and Bourdet<sup>18</sup> there, two to each town: Toul, Metz, Verdun, and Nancy. I hope to provide them with two thousand livres a month.

Yesterday we completed the mission we gave in La Chapelle, near Saint-Lazare. We gathered together there all the poor from Lorraine who are in the city and gave a loaf of bread to each one every day for a week. There were about three hundred of them.<sup>19</sup>

Well now, that is all. I conclude by recommending myself to your Holy Sacrifices in those holy places. I hope to write to you from now on by each mail and I trust that our Lord will make use of you in many good works, if you take care of your health, as I beg you to do. I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

Paris, May 10, 1639

*Addressed:* Monsieur Lebreton, Priest of the Mission, in Rome

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whose virtue was especially in danger. Thanks to his initiative, an association among the wealthier class was formed, whose only aim was to come to the assistance of the ruined nobility of Lorraine through monthly dues. Abelly dedicated an entire chapter of his book to an account of what Saint Vincent did to help Lorraine (cf. vol. I, chap. XXXV).

<sup>15</sup>Should not the name be *Boudet*? The name *Rondet* appears only here and is not to be found in the personnel catalogue.

<sup>16</sup>Charles Aulent was born in Ath, a town in Hainaut (Belgium), on February 1, 1614. He entered the Congregation of the Mission at the end of 1636, was ordained a priest in 1640, and pronounced his vows on December 11, 1644. He directed the house in Toul from 1646 to 1647, the year he died.

<sup>17</sup>Jean-Baptiste Delestoile, born in Bar-le-Duc, entered the Congregation of the Mission, April 1, 1637, at the age of twenty-two.

<sup>18</sup>At that time, two students of the Mission had this name. Jean Bourdet was born in Saint-Babel (Puy-de-Dôme), May 14, 1614, entered the Congregation of the Mission at the end of 1636, was ordained a priest in 1640, and pronounced his vows in 1643. He was Superior in Troyes from 1642 to 1644 and in Saint Méen from 1645 to 1646. Etienne Bourdet was born in the same locality as Jean, on April 27, 1615, entered the Congregation of the Mission on October 9, 1638, and was ordained a priest, June 2, 1640. He was Superior in Toul from 1641 to 1642, and pronounced his vows on June 10, 1648.

<sup>19</sup>Abelly, who recalls the two missions given in La Chapelle during Lent in the years 1641 and 1642 on behalf of the poor of Lorraine who had taken refuge in Paris (*op. cit.*, vol. I, chap. XXXV, p. 166; vol. II, chap. XI, sect. I, p. 386), seems to be unaware of the mission of 1639. The Missionaries were assisted by wealthy people who came to distribute alms.

377. - TO ROBERT DE SERGIS, IN TOULOUSE

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter four days ago, but I lost it and cannot remember everything you wrote. Here is what I do recall: (1) that your work is being blessed; (2) that I failed to answer two points in your next to last letter; (3) that you judged it wise [not]<sup>1</sup> to suggest to the Archbishop<sup>2</sup> what I wrote you about renting the house and about the ordinands who will be directed to you by the Archbishop; about going to Saintonge.

Now, I shall say in response to the first point, that I praise God for the blessing He is bestowing on your missions and I beg Him to strengthen your body more and more for your work, and your soul so that you may love Him better.

(2) I am very sorry for having forgotten those two points in my next to last letter. I most humbly beg your pardon and hope that Our Lord will grant me the grace to mend my ways.

(3) All the reasons you sent me for not having made the suggestions concerning the lodging and the ordinands should not have prevented you from making them. They are only natural products of the human mind which usually reasons according to its predispositions. The matter in question here is not a desire to establish ourselves, as you say, but to do the good I proposed to you,<sup>3</sup> which the adorable Providence of God suggested to a good soul who wishes to be responsible for the expenses. We should not expect fewer blessings there than the goodness of God is bestowing on the ordinands here, even though they are high-minded and usually scorn ordinary things. It would have been good for the Archbishop to decide and for us to respect his judgment and

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**Letter 377.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Saint Vincent most certainly forgot these two words, which seem called for by the rest of the letter.

<sup>2</sup>Charles de Montchal.

<sup>3</sup>First wording: to do the good in question.

wishes and submit ourselves to it, as I am submitting in this matter to yours. However, I tell you quite frankly, Monsieur, that no one in the Company has ever raised objections about anything I have written to him. One man who did write his objections still did what I had told him. Another, who in his own opinion had an objection to signing an agreement I had made, sent me a number of reasons and excuses and had others write to me about it. Because of that, we are involved in a serious lawsuit at the Council, which we can pursue only at the risk of losing an establishment<sup>4</sup> and with shame.

O Monsieur de Sergis, how important a matter is submission of spirit to a superior! I admit that the knowledge you have of my miseries and the gravity of my sins destroys your confidence; but He who said: *quaecumque dixerint vobis facite*,<sup>5</sup> no doubt obliged Himself by that to offer sufficient light to those whom He requires to obey. I think that I have never seen or heard that the subject failed by obeying the superior in matters which are not evil, but that is indeed the usual result for those who disobey them. You intended to take Saint Francis Xavier as your patron. In the name of God, Monsieur, do so particularly with regard to obedience. Do not imagine that Our Lord is less pleased with the obedience you render to a poor miserable sinner than that which he rendered to a saint. Do it, as he did, for the love of God Who is happy when things go that way and Who is displeased with the contrary.

We shall discuss this in greater detail when I have the happiness of seeing you there. I hope to come soon with the Bishop of Alet<sup>6</sup> who is waiting for his Bulls and expects to leave shortly afterwards. That is why I am asking you not to leave the Archdiocese

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<sup>4</sup>This is probably a reference to the establishment in Toul and to Antoine Colée who was Superior there from 1637 to 1638.

<sup>5</sup>*Do whatever they tell you.* Jn. 2:5. "His mother instructed those waiting on table, 'Do whatever he tells you'." (NAB)

<sup>6</sup>Nicolas Pavillon. He was consecrated on August 22, 1639, and entered his diocese shortly thereafter.

of Toulouse to go to Saintonge or anywhere else, which is the last point in your letter.

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, May 13, 1639

377a. - TO PIERRE DU CHESNE, IN JOIGNY

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Yesterday evening I received your letter of the twenty-fourth of this month, consoled that it was from you and sorry about the state of our good Monsieur Lucas's illness. I had been told that he was quite well. O Monsieur, how that touched my heart! I willingly commended him to our Little Company three days in a row and, of course, I think that each one has fulfilled his duty in that regard. I am sending him good Monsieur Chiroye,<sup>1</sup> who is quite fond of him and will take very special care of him, while you, Monsieur, you will go back to Troyes for the ordinands' retreat. I beg you, Monsieur, to embrace Monsieur Lucas in spirit for me. I enfold him in my arms with the same love Our Lord alone would manifest and, from his embrace, I shall come to you and do the same. I cannot tell you what a good account I have had of both of you. Courage, *in nomine Domini*, Who will bring about in you and through both of you what He wishes you to do for His glory and

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**Letter 377a.** - Archives of the Mission (Paris), photocopy. The whereabouts of the original is unknown.

<sup>1</sup>Jacques Chiroye was born in Auppegard (Seine-Maritime) on March 14, 1614, and entered the Congregation of the Mission on June 25, 1638. He served as Superior in Luçon (1640-1650, 1654-1660, 1662-1666) and in Crécy (1660-1662). He pronounced his vows on March 9, 1660, and died January 7, 1689.

for the salvation of souls. What else can we do? We must keep going: *caritas Christi urget nos.*<sup>2</sup>

I am afraid that good Monsieur Lucas has not been bled enough. I beg you, Monsieur, to make known quite gently to the doctor that, from a lack of bleeding during a serious illness I had in Joigny, I had some difficulties which are still with me. The people from that region do not need bleedings as much as those from Paris where we are formed to them from long habit. I approve; I also think that good doctor from Troyes is right when he says: "*qui bene purgat bene sanat.*"<sup>3</sup> I hope our Missionaries, to whom I am asking you to tell this for me with all the respect and . . . <sup>4</sup> that you can, will pay attention to it.

I sent a letter to Monsieur Lucas — it will be a week ago tomorrow, Tuesday. I do not know if he received my letter. I am being forced to end this one, but nothing in the world will ever make me lessen the tender affection I have for good Monsieur Lucas and for you. I am for both of you and shall be all my life, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, May 30, 1639

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<sup>2</sup>*The Charity of Christ urges us.* 2 Cor. 5:14. "The love of Christ impels us who have reached the conviction that since one died for all, all died." (NAB)

<sup>3</sup>*He who purges well thoroughly restores to health.*

<sup>4</sup>This word or phrase is illegible.

378. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1635 and 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I was not able to give you a reply yesterday because I had been bled, or this morning because I had taken some medicine.

I shall tell you quite briefly, with regard to your son's lodging, that I am thinking, all things considered, of placing him with M. Rebours<sup>2</sup> if he remains and does not change his room. But if he does change, I see nothing better than M. Coqueret. Being with other priests would be difficult or useless for him. I know you have many things against the latter, which I have taken into consideration. Nevertheless, this is my thinking. M. Rebours will not leave his room so soon. Even though he should leave it, enjoy the time there is; then we shall see about later. It would be wise, in the meantime, for you to allow him to come back to you, if you wish the correction you gave him these past few days to do him any good.

I am sending you Madame Goussault's letter which I just received. Let me know what you think about the situation of your Sisters, both with regard to that area and to the Auvergne region.

If you were a strong woman, you would lay aside your little distractions and maternal affections and you would strengthen

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**Letter 378.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

For this letter Coste utilized the Pémartin edition (vol. II, p. 3) and, for the last line, the Saint Paul manuscript, p. 69. In 1942 the original of this letter was found in the hospital in Tarbes and published in the *Annales* (1941-1942), p. 559. Although the differences between Coste and the original are said to be slight (cf. *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, p. 15), a photocopy of the original has been used here instead of the Coste text.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written during Madame Goussault's lifetime, at a time when it looked as though Michel Le Gras was ready to give up a career in the priesthood.

<sup>2</sup>Father Hilarion Rebours, a Carthusian, was a first cousin of Saint Louise's husband (cf. Gobillon, *op. cit.*, p. 21). Father Rebours was involved in the discussions concerning Michel Le Gras' vocation (cf. no. 379).

your body and mind at the sight of so many opportunities of doing good. Do so, in the name of God, Mademoiselle. God knows what I am for you and what you are for me. I am your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Please answer me this evening.

379. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LA CHAPELLE

[Between 1635 and 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Blessed be God that you are over your serious illness and that you took care of yourself today and did not go to Mass! I entreat you for the love of Our Lord to look after your health and spare nothing in that regard.

If you need any money, send me word; perhaps we even owe you some. I shall find out from M. Dehorgny and from you, please.

I saw that young woman and do not know what to tell you, except that I think your plan to see her three or four days before she enters is a good one. With that in view, I gave her half an écu to live on.

Your husband's cousin, M. Rebours, came here yesterday. We still agree that your son's happiness lies in the ecclesiastical state and, secondly, that his temperament seems more inclined to that than to the world. Thirdly, perhaps that young man got his mind all confused about the matter, which in turn revived his little

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**Letter 379.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Period of Michel Le Gras' indecision concerning his vocation.

aversions for the Saint-Nicolas<sup>2</sup> community. However, when matters have been set before him clearly, he will come to his senses. There is danger of encouraging his whim by giving him a short suit, unless it is for going to the country; even then it will have to be modest. If after all that, he perseveres, *in nomine Domini*, we shall have to consent. But I do not judge it advisable to go and consent easily to the reversal of the dispositions he has shown all his life towards being a priest, on account of the change that young libertine<sup>3</sup> has brought about in his mind. Therefore, please be at rest on that point, Mademoiselle. Our Lord will take care of the whole affair. Do not be afraid and let us not be in a hurry.

I am well enough, thank God, and I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in La Chapelle

380. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1636 and 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am delighted that Our Lord is strengthening you in retreat but, in the name of God, let us not tempt him. Finish this evening and add to your confession what has happened since, and do so briefly.

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<sup>2</sup>Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.

<sup>3</sup>This could be the Comte de Mauny, who had a bad influence on Michel Le Gras. Saint Louise complained about him in one of her letters (cf. *Ecrits spirituels*, L. 152), subsequent, it is true, to this one by a few years.

**Letter 380.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Before 1636, Saint Louise was not in La Chapelle and after 1639, Saint Vincent would not have written "Thursday morning" at the end of the letter.



You take a little too long at it; I hope you are teaching your Sisters to confess more quickly. It is sufficient for them to accuse themselves of three or four faults which cause them the greatest shame. I imagine the poor young women are not committing any mortal sin, thank God, and it is enough to accuse oneself of two or three venial sins, or even of one, because that is sufficient and not necessary matter for confession.

I did not receive your package until yesterday evening because I slept at the Bons-Enfants the night before; therefore I have not been able to look over your meditations as yet. I shall do so with pleasure as soon as possible. As for your confession, I shall come to La Chapelle next Saturday, if I can.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I wish you a heart entirely filled with that of Our Lord and I am, in the love of the same Jesus Christ, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

Thursday morning

I think you would do well to wait until after the retreat to see about the faults of your Sisters and admonish them for them. We must think about a chapter.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

### 381. - TO SAINT LOUISE<sup>1</sup>

I cannot give you any reason for your illness other than God's good pleasure. Adore it then, that good pleasure, without asking

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**Letter 381.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. III, chap. V, sect. I, p. 37.

<sup>1</sup>Abelly prefaced this letter with these words: "This same lady being ill one day wrote to ask him to admonish her of the evil in her soul, which was causing the distress in her body." Although Abelly does not name the lady, there is no doubt that it is Saint Louise, always ready to see the punishment of past faults in the trials and sufferings God sent her.

why God is pleased to see you in a state of suffering. He is sovereignly glorified by our abandonment to His direction, without our discussing the reason for His Will, except to say that His Will is His reason itself and His reason is His Will. Therefore, let us take refuge in it as did Isaac in the will of Abraham and Jesus Christ in the Will of His Father.

382. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LA CHAPELLE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I cannot tell you how sorry I am to hear about the pain you are again suffering from the return of your headache. *Mon Dieu*, Mademoiselle, could it be the air in La Chapelle that is causing your illness? Please consult a doctor and, if that is the case, leave there as soon as possible and get a house in our faubourg, if there are any for rent — or in the city. If you cannot find any for rent at present and if Mademoiselle Poulailion's is still in good condition, see if she would be willing to lend it to you for a time while you look for another. Please see to this as soon as possible, Mademoiselle, and do all you can to get well.

*Mon Dieu*, how reluctant I was to leave without seeing you and how sorry I am to be staying longer than I expected.<sup>1</sup> Oh well! you will forgive me this fault as you are accustomed to bear with so many others. In the meantime, be as cheerful as you can and neglect nothing whatever for the good of your health, out of love for Him Who loves you so much that He gave His life for you.

I shall be here another week or so, after which I hope to be in Paris<sup>2</sup> as soon as possible. I am going to celebrate Holy Mass so

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Letter 382. - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The Saint had gone to Troyes to make the visitation of the Missionaries' house.

<sup>2</sup>Saint Vincent was still in Troyes on July 28.

that, please God, I may find you completely cured and in very good spirits, so that you may serve Him for a long time in the work to which His goodness has called you.

I am a little worried about the health of Madame Goussault, the President's wife. Please write me a few lines to tell me how both of you are.<sup>3</sup> I am in His love, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Troyes, July 4, 1639

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, in La Chapelle

383. - TO SAINT JANE FRANCES, IN ANNECY

Troyes, July 14, 1639

Most dear and most worthy Mother,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Having come to this city of Troyes with the Commander de Sillery to visit the little family we have here in this diocese, I saw, in the letter he received from you, the answer you gave him concerning his proposal for an endowment fund for two men from our Little Company to work among the poor country people in your diocese.<sup>1</sup> Now, I shall tell you, most worthy Mother, that I

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<sup>3</sup>Madame Goussault and Saint Louise.

**Letter 383.** - The original autograph letter is in the Visitation monastery of Annecy. A photocopy is also filed in the Archives of the Mission (Paris).

<sup>1</sup>It was once again thanks to the generosity of Commander de Sillery that the establishment in Annecy was founded. By a contract dated June 3, 1639, he gave Saint Vincent forty thousand livres to be taken from the Melun taxes for the upkeep of two priests and a brother who were capable of giving missions, plus five thousand livres for the purchase of rosaries and devotional leaflets and booklets. The Missionaries were to be on duty by September 15, and were to work gratuitously for eight months of the year in the parishes the bishop would assign to them, and every five years from 1641 on, in Brie-Comte-Robert (Seine-et-Marne). (Cf. Arch. Nat., S 6716.)

received with inexpressible consolation the Commander's proposal to me concerning that foundation. It will give us the means of working in the diocese of the saints and it is under the protection and direction of our worthy Mother. Therefore, we have reason to hope that Our Lord will bless the holy intentions of the good Commander and the humble labors of His Missionaries.

And because you wish to know what constitutes our humble way of life, I shall tell you then, most worthy Mother, that our Little Company is established to go from village to village at its own expense, preaching, catechizing, and having the poor people make general confessions of their entire past life. We try to settle the disagreements we find among them and do all we can to see that the sick poor are assisted corporally and spiritually by the Confraternity of the Charity, composed of women, which we set up in the places where we give the mission and which desire it.

To this work, which is our principal one, and in order to perform it better, the Providence of God has added that of taking into our houses ten days before ordination those who are to take orders. We feed and support them and during that time teach them practical Theology, the ceremonies of the Church, and how to make and practice mental prayer according to the method of our blessed Father, the Bishop of Geneva.<sup>2</sup> We do this for those who belong to the diocese in which we are established.

We live in the spirit of the servants of the Gospel with regard to the bishops. When they tell us: "Go there," we go; "Come here," we come; "Do that," we do it; and that is how we act in what concerns the functions mentioned above. As for the internal discipline of the Company, that depends on a superior general.

Most of us have made the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and a fourth to devote ourselves all our life to the assistance of the poor common people. We are seeking to have them approved by His Holiness<sup>3</sup> and are asking permission to

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<sup>2</sup>Saint Francis de Sales.

<sup>3</sup>Urban VIII.

make a fifth vow, that of obedience to the bishops in whose dioceses we are established, in what concerns the aforesaid functions.<sup>4</sup>

We practice poverty and obedience and try to live in a religious manner, even though we are not religious. We get up at four o'clock in the morning and take half an hour to get dressed and make our bed. We make an hour of mental prayer together in the church and recite Prime, Terce, Sext, and None together. We then celebrate our Masses, each in his own place. When that is done, everyone retires to his room to study. At ten-thirty, we make a particular examen on the virtue we are trying to acquire. We then go to the refectory where we have dinner with individual portions and reading at table. After that, we go to adore the Blessed Sacrament together and say the *Angelus Domini Nuntiavit Mariae*, etc. Next we have an hour of recreation together, after which everyone returns to his room until two o'clock when we recite Vespers and Compline together. We then return to our rooms to study until five o'clock, at which time Matins and Lauds are recited together. Another particular examen is made at that time. We have supper next and then spend an hour in recreation. When that is over, we go to the church to make the general examen, say evening prayers, and read the points for the next morning's prayer. After that, we retire to our rooms and go to bed at nine o'clock.

When we are on mission in the country, we do the same, except that we go to the church at six o'clock in the morning to celebrate Holy Mass and to hear confessions after the sermon which a man from the Company has just given following the Holy Mass he has said beforehand. We hear confessions until eleven o'clock, then go to eat dinner and return to the church at two o'clock to hear confessions there until five o'clock. Following that, one man teaches catechism and the others go off to say Matins and Lauds so as to have supper at six o'clock.

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<sup>4</sup>This project never materialized.

It is our maxim not to preach, catechize, or hear confessions in cities where there is a bishopric and not to leave a village until all the people have been instructed in the matters necessary for salvation and until everyone has made his general confession. We go to few places where there is anyone left who fails to do so. When we have finished in one village, we go to another where we do the same thing. We work from around the feast of All Saints until that of Saint John; we leave the months of July, August, September, and a part of October to the people so that they can take care of the harvest and the vintage. And when we have worked twenty days or thereabouts, we rest for a week or so and then go back to work. It is not possible to continue such labor for a longer time without that respite and without a day off each week.

We have our days of solitude every year. We hold chapter every Friday morning, during which each one accuses himself of his failings, receives a penance from the Superior, and is obliged to carry it out. Two priests and two brothers ask the Company for the charity of being warned of their failings and, after them others do so, each in turn. In the evening of the same day we have a conference on our rules and the practice of the virtues. Everyone there shares the thoughts Our Lord gave him in prayer on the topic being discussed.

We never go out without permission and always two by two. Upon returning, everyone goes to see the Superior and gives him an account of what he has done. We neither write nor receive letters unless the Superior has seen and approved them. Everyone is obliged to agree to having his faults charitably reported to his Superior and to try to accept from and give to others the admonitions needed. Silence is observed from evening until the end of dinner the next day and from after the morning recreation until the one in the evening.

We spend two years in the seminary, that is, in the novitiate. The training there is rather strict, by the mercy of God, so that for a number of reasons the seminarians do not communicate with the priests without permission.

The said Congregation is approved by His Holiness and established in the city and in the faubourg of Saint-Denis in Paris, and in the dioceses of Poitiers, Luçon, Toul, Agen, and Troyes.

There you have our humble way of life, most dear and most worthy Mother. Please do us the charity, for the love of Our Lord, of telling us your reactions to it. You may be assured, dear Mother, that I shall accept them as coming from God, from Whose love I request this charity of you. . . .<sup>5</sup>

I shall not say anything to you about your dear daughters in Paris except that I think they are advancing more and more in the love of their Divine Savior. I have a great pardon to ask of you because I have not visited them for a long time. The Sisters here<sup>6</sup> also have a good reputation and live fervently, and certainly with good reason. You could not believe, dear Mother, how greatly the spirit of Our Lord is evident in both the Mother<sup>7</sup> and the *déposée*,<sup>8</sup> or how well the rest of the house is doing, considering the difficulties it has had in the past.

Well now, dear Mother, permit me to ask if your unparalleled goodness still reserves for me the happiness of enjoying the place it gave me in your dear and most lovable heart? Certainly, I choose to hope so, even though my miseries render me most unworthy of it. In the name of God, dear [Mother],<sup>9</sup> please continue to grant

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<sup>5</sup>We deeply regret not being able to decipher three lines which were deliberately inked out on the original letter.

<sup>6</sup>In Troyes.

<sup>7</sup>Françoise-Madeleine Ariste, elected May 20, 1638. Saint Vincent had known her at the first monastery in Paris, where she had begun her religious life, and at the second monastery, where she had followed Mother de Beaumont in 1626. This pious Visitandine died in Troyes on June 10, 1667, after governing that house for twelve years.

<sup>8</sup>The name given to the Superior who leaves office. The Sister concerned here is Mother Claire-Marie Amaury, who had directed the monastery for a little more than six years, from July 6, 1631, to May 20, 1638. She was reelected in 1641 and died on October 10, 1651. In the first year of her entrance into the first monastery of Paris, Mother Amaury remained for seven months in the grips of a horrible temptation, which Saint Vincent himself related at the process of beatification of Saint Francis de Sales. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. II, chap. VII, pp. 331 ff.; *Annales Salésiennes* (December 20, 1907), p. 213; *Année Sainte*, vol. X, p. 225.)

<sup>9</sup>A word left out of the original text.

me that favor. Trusting that you will, I am your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL  
i. s. C. M.

*Addressed:* Most worthy Mother de Chantal, Foundress of the Order of the Visitation Sainte-Marie, in Annecy

383a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Troyes, July 18, 1639

Mademoiselle,

Blessed be God that you are better! *O mon Dieu!* how that consoles me! Please continue now to strengthen yourself and spare nothing in that regard.

*Mon Dieu!* Mademoiselle, how difficult it is for me to be away so long! But who can hurry or delay the order of adorable Providence!

Here is a letter from the Duchesse d'Aiguillon with regard to replacing little Jeanne.<sup>1</sup> Please do so as soon as possible and send her a stronger girl; I could not tell you whom. God will make known to you the one he has chosen for that purpose, if He so desires.

I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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**Letter 383a.** - Autograph letter. According to Coste, the original was at the home of the Pastor of Saint-Nicolas-de-Gaulène (Tarn). Coste published this letter in vol. XIII, p. 842, no. 3319. It is placed here in proper chronological order.

<sup>1</sup>Jeanne Lepage.



384. - TO LEONARD BOUCHER, IN TOUL

Troyes, July 20, 1639

Monsieur,

I have received two of your letters since I have been here, one by way of Paris and the other from this bearer on the first trip he made to see you.<sup>1</sup> The last letter says very little; the first shows me your diligence in sending my letters. I thank you equally for both of them, as also for what you told me about the difficulty we are having with good Monsieur Fleury.<sup>2</sup> I have nothing to say about that other than what I wrote to the President,<sup>3</sup> except that it is to be hoped that you and I might have a little more regard for the maxims of the Gospel than we do. Please make your meditation one day on these words: "To him who takes away your cassock, give also your cloak";<sup>4</sup> and on these: *Inquire pacem et perseguere eam*;<sup>5</sup> and another on these words: *quaecumque dixerint vobis facite*;<sup>6</sup> and on these: *qui vos audit me audit, et qui vos spernit me spernit*.<sup>7</sup> Please send me the thoughts Our Lord gives you concerning them, followed by the resolutions you will take. I shall be consoled to see them.<sup>8</sup>

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Monsieur, your. . .

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**Letter 384.** - Reg. 2, p. 279.

<sup>1</sup>To Toul, where Léonard Boucher was.

<sup>2</sup>The uncle of François de Fleury, future chaplain to the Queen of Poland, Marie-Louise de Gonzague.

<sup>3</sup>President de Trélon, Commander de Sillery's nephew.

<sup>4</sup>Mt. 5:40. "If anyone wants to go to law over your shirt, hand him your coat as well." (NAB)

<sup>5</sup>*Seek peace and follow it.* Ps. 34:15. "Turn from evil, and do good; seek peace, and follow after it." (NAB)

<sup>6</sup>*Do whatever they tell you.* Jn. 2:5. "His mother instructed those waiting on table, 'Do whatever he tells you'." (NAB)

<sup>7</sup>*He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me.* Lk. 10:16. "He who hears you, hears me. He who rejects you, rejects me. And he who rejects me, rejects him who sent me." (NAB)

<sup>8</sup>The Congregation of the Mission was involved in a lawsuit with the Order of the Holy Spirit.

385. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Troyes, July 28, 1639

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I was worried; they had sent me word that you were a little worse. Yesterday, Monsieur Portail wrote me the opposite and your letter proves it to me. I praise God and pray that He will restore you to perfect health. Please do all you can to get well, Mademoiselle, for the love of Our Lord.

What steps can be taken to prevent the reduction of your revenue to the rate of five and a half percent? . . . With regard to M. Arnaud, I do not see any at all since the Prince has so ordained it. You could also, by similar means and opportunity, increase it by buying some stock in salt; but you know the risk. . . . Honest people will pay you well. I see no possibility of supplementing it otherwise.

When I return, I shall be most pleased to hear what you have to tell me about your thoughts with regard to Providence. I am likewise pleased that you sent the honor of your remembrance to Saint-Sulpice.

Thank you for the news you gave me about Madame Goussault. I hope to see both of you around the end of this coming week and I am forever, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

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**Letter 385.** - Gossin, *op. cit.*, p. 438, from the original letter made available to Coste by Abbé Dumesnil, Canon of Saint-Louis in Versailles. Unfortunately, the text of the letter is incomplete because in two places M. Gossin was unable to decipher Saint Vincent's handwriting.

386. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1639]<sup>1</sup>

. . . Jeanne, dismiss her and tell her it is because she struck her companion. Give her something and let tomorrow's feast go by. She will be all right with the Sisters at Saint-Sauveur until she can find work. Tell the others that this is not the first time she has hit someone, that we had forgiven her the rest, but that the scandal would be too great if it were said of the Daughters of Charity that they fight like cats and dogs. Say a word about it to Madame Goussault, the President's wife, and give some thought as to whether it would be advisable to mention it to the other officers.

I shall try to notify M. Renar without mentioning your name. You are right about the medals. Please use them the way you mentioned to me.

If I do not remember to send Saint Bridget<sup>2</sup> back to you some day this week, please remind me.

Please receive Communion tomorrow for a serious matter, so that, please God, two people do not get into an argument over the Charity in which Our Lord has bound them together.

I bid you and also your little patient a good day. I am not telling you that you must take care of her, because you [will not neglect to do so, since you see Our Lord in her. In His love] and in that of His holy Mother, I am your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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**Letter 386.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Nos. 386, 387, and 388 go together. They precede the death of Madame Goussault (September 20, 1639) and come after the foundation of the work of the Foundlings (1638). The place given to the words: "Saint-Lazare, Thursday morning" at the beginning of no. 388 shows us that it is from 1639 at the earliest. Therefore, all three should be placed in 1639. The beginning of the original of no. 386 has been cut off and lost.

<sup>2</sup>The life of Saint Bridget.

387. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1639]<sup>1</sup>

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You seem depressed. You are afraid that God is angry and wants none of the service you are rendering Him, because He is taking your Daughters away from you. Far from it, Mademoiselle, His acting that way is a sign that He cherishes it, for He is treating you as His dear spouse, the Church. At its beginning, He not only had the majority die by natural deaths, but also from torture and torments. Who would not have said on seeing that, that He was angry with those holy young plants? Therefore, do not believe that any longer, but rather the contrary.

Since you agree, I shall send for that young woman, Jeanne, or, if you know where she is, please send her to me. I told Madame de Herse<sup>2</sup> who she is.

Hubert<sup>3</sup> did not go to Picardy. I doubt whether I shall send him there so soon. He will visit his sister<sup>4</sup> before he leaves.

I shall get nowhere with that priest; you will do more with him than I.

It is strange that you fear my departure as you do. Set your mind at ease; my journey is broken up. The longest part I can foresee is the trip to Pontoise tomorrow.

In the name of God, Mademoiselle, love your poverty and be at peace. It is the greatest honor you can render right now to Our Lord, Who is tranquillity itself.

Could you not go to the home of Madame Goussault, the President's wife, today? I would be very happy if you could. It would

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**Letter 387.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>As stated in no. 386, n.1, this letter goes with nos. 386 and 388 and is, therefore, from the same year, 1639.

<sup>2</sup>Madame de Herse had sent Jeanne to Saint Louise.

<sup>3</sup>Hubert Bécu, a coadjutor brother.

<sup>4</sup>Marie Bécu, a Daughter of Charity. She was at the Motherhouse at that time.

give you a little relaxation from your continuous work. I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

388. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Saint-Lazare, Thursday morning [1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I do not know who told your Sisters that I am not well. By God's mercy, I am feeling fine. May it please His goodness to grant me the grace of making good use of the health He is giving me!

I think you would do well to write and tell that good Sister we are consoled that Our Lord has allowed her to recognize her fault in having listened to that temptation. She must make good use of the grace God has given her. She should be well convinced that all good people are obliged by God to suffer temptation, and that neither this one nor others can ever weaken her if she is faithful to God. No matter where she is or what she is doing, she will always be tempted and distressed; that is her cross. If she wishes to follow Jesus Christ, she must carry it.

The meeting<sup>2</sup> could not take place tomorrow. We scheduled the one concerning the Foundlings<sup>3</sup> for tomorrow at Mademoiselle Viole's house.

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**Letter 388.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Date indicated by the content and context of this letter and by the placement of the day of the week at its beginning, a practice Saint Vincent adopted sometime in 1639.

<sup>2</sup>The meeting of the Ladies of Charity.

<sup>3</sup>The meeting of the Ladies involved in the work of the Foundlings.

Last night I informed the stout Jeanne that she must leave and that I gave you the fifty livres she sent me by way of Madame Forest. I think there were fifty-two livres; she said eighteen écus.<sup>4</sup> We shall have the remainder given to her. She thought Madame de Herse had given me one hundred francs belonging to her, which she says that good lady is holding. I told her to ask her for them. I think it is well for you to act cautiously in this matter, but firmly and effectively.

Your waters will come today.

*Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras*

388a. - SAINT JANE FRANCES TO SAINT VINCENT

[End of July 1639]<sup>1</sup>

*Most honored and dear Father,*

*From the letters and reports the Commander has sent us, we have learned his feelings, those of the Bishops of Sens<sup>2</sup> and of Bourges,<sup>3</sup> your*

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<sup>4</sup>Eighteen écus would equal fifty-four livres.

**Letter 388a.** - Archives of the Visitation of Annecy: Chantal (Ste. J.-F. de), Série Oeuvres, B, N<sup>o</sup> 11, f<sup>o</sup> 3. This edition uses the text of the manuscript copy published by Roger Devos, *op. cit.*, 49 (1973), 207-208, no. 5.

<sup>1</sup>The content of this letter and other letters written by Saint Jane Frances at this time enabled Devos to assign this plausible date. The newly consecrated Bishop of Geneva, Juste Guérin, came to Annecy on July 17, 1639. Saint Jane Frances herself tells us (Archives of the Visitation of Annecy, Chantal [Ste J.-F. de], Série Oeuvres, B, N<sup>o</sup> 11, f<sup>o</sup> 4-5 v<sup>o</sup>) that one of the first acts of the new Bishop was to visit her monastery and discuss the Apostolic Visitor.

<sup>2</sup>Octave de Saint-Lary de Bellegarde. Born in Brouage (Charente-Maritime) in July 1587 of César, Duc de Bellegarde and Governor of Saintonge, and Jeanne de Lion de Châteauneuf, Bishop Bellegarde enjoyed a rapid and brilliant ecclesiastical career. Having already been made Abbé of Saint-Germain in Auxerre and customary chaplain of Henri IV in 1607, he became Bishop of Conserans in 1612, and on November 14, 1621, he was named Archbishop of Sens. He promoted the reform of the old religious orders and brought into his diocese a variety of new foundations. He also presided over several Assemblies of the Clergy of France. He died in Montreuil, near Paris, on July 26, 1646.

<sup>3</sup>Probably André Frémot, Bishop-emeritus of Bourges. Born in Dijon on August 26, 1573, he was the son of Bénigne Frémot, Seigneur de Thoste, presiding judge in the Parlement of Bourgogne and Councillor of State, and Marguerite Berbisey. Saint Jane Frances Frémot de

*thoughts, dearest Father, and those of Father Binet<sup>4</sup> concerning an extraordinary visitor. I am quite certain that, if our blessed Father<sup>5</sup> were in the world, he would receive them with respect and acquiescence.*

*I proposed them to the Bishop of Geneva<sup>6</sup> and to our spiritual Father,<sup>7</sup> both individuals of great piety and prudence. They likewise received them with honor; they see how useful the plan would be for maintaining conformity and holding each to its obligations, especially several monasteries which are neglected for want of prelates and which, in the end, might decline. But, dearest Father, we see clearly that, if the request for a visitor<sup>8</sup> were to be made in the name of our Institute, our prelates and the*

Chantal was his sister. He became Counselor in the Parlement of Bourgogne in 1599, commendatory Abbot of Saint-Etienne in Dijon in 1601, and in 1603 Archbishop of Bourges and Councillor of State. Due to some clashes of interest with the Prince de Condé, Frémiot had to resign his archbishopric in 1621 and, in compensation, he obtained the Abbeys of Breteuil and of Ferrières, as well as the Priory of Nogent-le-Rotrou. In 1626 he carried out a mission to Pope Urban VIII. He died in Paris on May 13, 1641, and was buried in the chapel of the first monastery of the Visitation. A cultured and worldly-minded prelate, he turned to piety in 1624 under the influence of his sister.

<sup>4</sup>Etienne Binet. Born in Dijon on October 7, 1569, he was a colleague of Saint Francis de Sales at the Collège de Clermont in Paris and in 1590 entered the novitiate of the Jesuits in Novellara, near Modena. As head of the professed house in Paris from 1607 to 1624, he had the opportunity of meeting Mother de Chantal, who often mentioned him in her letters. She also called on him to revise the *Constitutions*, the *Coutumier*, and the editions of the *Entretiens* and *Épîtres spirituelles* of Saint Francis de Sales. Binet held important posts in the Company of Jesus: Provincial of Champagne (1624-1627) and of Lyons (1627-1631), Rector of the Collège de Clermont in Paris (1631-1633), and Provincial of France (1633-1639). He died in Paris, July 4, 1639. He is known especially as one of the most characteristic representatives of Christian humanism.

<sup>5</sup>Saint Francis de Sales.

<sup>6</sup>Juste Guérin. Born Balthazar Guérin in Tramoy in 1578, he studied law in Turin and Pavia, then entered the novitiate of the Barnabites in Monza on December 11, 1599. He made his profession there on February 24, 1601, taking the name Dom Juste. Ordained a priest on September 24, 1605, he was chosen to collaborate in the foundation of a Barnabite convent in Turin and became confessor of the young daughters of Duke Charles-Emmanuel I, Marie and Catherine. In 1614 he took possession of the Collège d'Annecy in the name of his Order. Consecrated Bishop of Geneva in Turin on June 25, 1639, he made his entry into Annecy the following July 17. Having obtained Charles-Auguste de Sales as his coadjutor in 1645, he withdrew to Rumilly where he died on November 3 of that year.

<sup>7</sup>Nicolas Baytaz de Doucy, Seigneur de Château-Martin. Ordained a priest on April 4, 1620, he was made a Canon of Saint-Pierre in Geneva, Dean of the collegial church of Notre-Dame in Annecy in 1635, and Superior of the two monasteries of the Visitation in Annecy. Author of a treatise entitled *Abréviation des plus difficiles opérations de perspective pratique* (Annecy: A. Leyat, 1644), he drew up the plans for the two Visitation monasteries in Annecy and worked on the development of the model plans inserted in the *Coutumiers* of 1628 and 1637.

<sup>8</sup>For some fifteen years, several people interested in the the welfare of the Visitation Order

majority of our monasteries would greatly object for the reasons which I wrote at length to the Commander. I think he will pass them on to you with the report, therefore, I shall not repeat them here. But I entreat you, dearest Father, to devote your prayers and reflections before God to knowing His divine Will concerning the direction and carrying out of this plan. May it be for His glory and the good of our Institute and may things be done with all possible gentleness and so as to preserve the respect due to our prelates. The Bishop of Sens possesses the spirit of God; he is the one whom Our Lord has inspired with this thought, as you told our most virtuous and dear Father, the Commander, who wrote it to me.

I think it would be well to meet one more time to consider every aspect of the affair. The question is very important and demands great secrecy until it is settled. Dearest Father, please take this matter to heart a little. I say that to you, certainly not with any shadow of distrust regarding your affection, but because I fear your continual and important occupations do not allow you the leisure to take the time required for this one. But, dearest Father, make an effort in that regard, I entreat you, because God inspires in me a very special sense of support and peace regarding your judgment. Weigh everything well, I beg you once again.

389. - SAINT JANE FRANCES TO SAINT VINCENT

Live Jesus!

[Anney, 1639]<sup>1</sup>

. . . Moreover, dearest Father, it is a boundless consolation for me to hope to have your dear sons here as our good and dear father, Commander de Sillery, has promised. Is he not incomparable in his charity and we deeply obligated to Divine Providence for having given us such a support? May He be blessed eternally! Let us know, dearest Father, all

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had been discussing with Saint Jane Frances the feasibility of an Apostolic Visitor to insure a uniformity of spirit among the various monasteries. The Gallicanism of the French bishops and the independence of individual bishops were among the obstacles which had to be addressed.

**Letter 389.** - *Sainte Jeanne Frémyot de Chantal, sa vie et ses œuvres*, vol. VIII, p. 163, letter 1633. This letter fragment may have been the closing section of the newly published letter of Saint Jane Frances to Saint Vincent (no. 388a).

<sup>1</sup>Date of the Anney foundation. No. 390 seems to be the response to this letter.



that will have to be done and known for the consolation of that good servant of God.

*I beg His infinite tenderness to preserve you for a long time for His glory and the service of Holy Church. Keep me in mind before God and in your paternal affection, since I am with all my heart, although unworthy, etc.*

*Dear Father, when I consider the fruits those two good workers will bear in this large and populous diocese, I am delighted. I am also sure that, because of your piety and zeal for the Divine Glory, you will have this establishment founded on so solid a basis that it will never decline through any shortage either of men or of resources which might come about in your Congregation. Let us know also what the beds and other necessary furnishings for your priests should be like.*

390. - TO SAINT JANE FRANCES, IN ANNECY

Paris, August 15, 1639

Dearest and worthy Mother,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your undated letter which the Commander delivered to me, without a date, and you can imagine, most worthy Mother, with what reverence and affection I did so, since it was a letter from my excellent Mother and was filled with the fragrance and sweetness of her spirit. *Jésus!* dear Mother, it has filled my poor heart with that fragrance! Well now, blessed be the One for love of Whom your goodness has offered to receive us and find and furnish a house for us!<sup>1</sup> I am not thanking you for that, dear Mother,

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**Letter 390.** - Original autograph letter at the Visitation Monastery in Annecy. A photocopy is also filed in the Archives of the Mission (Paris).

<sup>1</sup>By the contract of June 3, 1639, Commander de Sillery had promised the Annecy Missionaries that he would procure a furnished lodging for them. He had not as yet kept his word. The following January 26 the Missionaries released him from his promise on payment of two thousand livres tournois, which along with another one thousand livres were to be used for the purchase of a house. In the beginning, they lived in a house given, prepared, and furnished for them by Saint Jane Frances.

because I am unworthy to do so, but I pray to God that He Himself may be your thanks and your reward. . . .<sup>2</sup>

As for what you told me about the mission's being established in such a way that it might not fail hereafter for lack of men or money, well, allow me to tell you that as far as men are concerned, dear Mother, the consolidation of the Company which we are negotiating in Rome — as I wrote to you from Troyes — is consolidation in the particular places where it will be established with the help of God, which I beg you to ask of Him for that purpose. As for assets, the Commander did me the honor of telling me that, if he sells some property, he will give us the capital of the revenue he has given us. We shall invest in your area as much of the inherited capital as is necessary for the support of the two Missionaries and a brother. That being the case, if Our Lord is pleased to grant His blessing to that good work, it will not fail for lack of men or want of money. The Commander seems unwilling to stop at that number.<sup>3</sup> May the Holy Name of God be blessed for that!

I have told you a great number of favorable things about this Little Company.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, dear Mother, that frightens me. Therefore, I beg you to discount many of them and not repeat what I said to anyone. Too good a reputation is very harmful and, by a just judgment of God, that is usually why results do not meet expectations, either because we become conceited or because the public attributes to men what is due to God alone. Therefore, I most humbly entreat you once again not to entertain the ideas that what the Commander tells you about us might give you and, still less, to talk about them to others. Alas! worthy Mother, if you

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<sup>2</sup>Forty lines of the original letter are omitted here because they contain so many crossed out words. Perhaps these lines dealt again with the question of an Apostolic Visitor, the discussion of which had to be treated "with great secrecy" according to Saint Jane Frances. It is regrettable that so much trouble was taken to obliterate these passages.

<sup>3</sup>On February 26, 1640, he made a second donation so that they might raise the number of priests to four and brothers to two. (Cf. Arch. Nat., S 6716.)

<sup>4</sup>Saint Vincent felt that he had spoken too well of his Company in his letter of July 14. He is trying here to belittle it in order to punish himself for having spoken about it too complacently.

knew our ignorance and the little virtue we have, you would greatly pity us! However, you will see that in reality in the two men we are sending.<sup>5</sup> That consoles me, because you will pray to God for us with greater compassion for our misery. Because I am saying this to you with tears in my eyes, in view of the truth of what I am telling you and the abominations of my poor soul, I beg you, dear Mother, to offer to God my embarrassment and the confession I am making of it in the presence of His Divine Majesty. Forgive me if I am abusing your patience by telling you my poor feelings this way. I am for my most worthy and excellent Mother, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, most worthy Mother, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL  
i. s. C. M.

Worthy Mother, the Commander has requested me to send you a list of the humble furnishings we need, which he is supposed to provide for us.

*Addressed:* Reverend Mother de Chantal, Foundress of the Order of the Visitation and Superior of the Annecy Monastery, in Annecy

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<sup>5</sup>Bernard Codoing and Pierre Escart. The latter was born in 1612 in the canton of Valais, Switzerland, entered the Congregation of the Mission on March 6, 1637, and was ordained a priest the following year. He was stationed in Annecy at the time of its foundation and later sent to Richelieu. At the beginning of his sojourn in Annecy, he made a good impression on Saint Jane Frances who said of him, "M. Escart is a saint." He was indeed virtuous, zealous, and very austere. He would have continued to please Saint Jane Frances if he had known how to preserve moderation in his zeal, to tolerate more patiently the defects of others, and to judge his confreres, especially his Superiors, with greater fairness. His temperament carried him to extremes. In a fit of temper, he killed one of his friends and, some time before 1659, he died in Rome where he had gone to beg absolution for this murder. (Cf. vol. II, no. 460.)

391. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[August or September 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I just saw Madame Goussault; she is not gravely, but critically ill. She realizes it and told me so. We must pray to God for her. Her heart is still rooted in the Will of God. I left the Chancellor's wife<sup>2</sup> there. She told me she would send you her carriage tomorrow. I shall give you a paper before you leave.

If there were sufficient housing, we would have to settle that matter, but since there is not, we need to think it over; we shall talk about it. In the meantime, I wish you a good evening and I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, at her house

392. - TO MOTHER DE LA TRINITE, IN TROYES

Saint-Lazare-lez-Paris, August 28, 1639

Dearest Mother,

May the spirit of union by which the Son of God united mankind to His Father be always with you forever!

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**Letter 391.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter appears to have been written shortly before Madame Goussault's death. She passed away on September 20, 1639, assisted by Saint Vincent.

<sup>2</sup>Madame Séguier.

**Letter 392.** - According to Coste, the original autograph letter was in the keeping of the Daughters of Charity, 18 rue de la Charité, Nancy. The present location of the letter is unknown.

I offer you a million thanks, dear Mother, for the ardent charity with which you do me the kindness of writing to me. And because it is God who moved your dear heart to do so and inspired you with all that you told me, I embrace it with all the affection and reverence I can. I promise you, excellent Mother, that I shall accomplish exactly everything you chose to recommend to me. It is true, dear Mother, that I am rather afraid my wretchedness has given our very dear and most amiable Commander<sup>1</sup> much cause for pain. But what else can come from a miserable sinner except failures and faults in every matter? However, it is certainly completely unintentional because, since I have had the honor of being acquainted with him, and for a very long time before that, I have never had any other intention than to honor and respect him as a great servant of God, whom I am unworthy to approach. And because I have no other way of making reparation than by having recourse to his goodness, I am doing so, dear Mother, through your own goodness. I most humbly beg his pardon, prostrate in spirit at his feet and yours and, indeed, with streams of tears brought to my eyes by the warm affection of my heart.

And because he is so good as to comply with my request concerning the Bishop of Troyes<sup>2</sup> and to approve of his having a room in the house, I most humbly thank him. I also entreat him, in the name of Our Lord, to bear once more with my weakness on the other point pertaining to the consent of the town, and to be so kind as to discuss it with them himself since you do not judge it advisable to write to them about it, for, dear Mother, they will not tolerate us there without objection.<sup>3</sup> I have been told that the wife of a magistrate said to someone:<sup>4</sup> “They had better not try to establish the Priests of the Mission in the faubourg; they will not be tolerated there!” How displeased the Commander would be,

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<sup>1</sup>Commander de Sillery.

<sup>2</sup>René de Breslay (1604-1641).

<sup>3</sup>The Missionaries lived in Sancey, near Troyes. Commander de Sillery was looking for another house for them in the faubourg.

<sup>4</sup>First wording: to someone who wrote to me about it.

dear Mother, if he were to see himself thwarted in the work of his hands! If we are rejected while doing in simplicity what depends on us, fine, the Will of God will be known to us; we shall settle down as best we can on the outskirts of the town and its faubourgs. If they approve, as I hope they will if the Commander himself talks to them about it, it will be a great consolation to us to have entered that establishment through the door of deference, submission, humility, simplicity, candor, and charity. If this shocks your sensibilities, dear Mother, or those of the Commander, I most humbly ask your pardon and his also and beg you once again, in the name of Our Lord, to bear with me in this wretchedness. To say that his presence will prevent any violence being done — I would like to believe that, but I have no doubt that, as soon as he turns his back, people will act otherwise.

I realize quite well, dear Mother, that Saint Teresa acted differently in some of her foundations, but then, she was a saint inspired by God for that purpose. But also, dear Mother, I do not know if she would have acted that way with regard to people who had an aversion for new establishments and had shown it on several occasions. That is why I once again entreat your boundless charity to accept what I am suggesting to you with all possible humility and respect and to propose it to the Commander. Tell him also that I most willingly approve of his taking the forty-five hundred livres which are in the hands of our dear Sisters of Sainte-Marie<sup>5</sup> where the good Bishop of Troyes suggested we place them. I am writing to Monsieur Dufestel to that effect, telling him to have the said sum handed over to the Commander upon his request.

Concerning the increase in the Geneva foundation,<sup>6</sup> indeed, dear Mother, I cannot tell you how grateful Our Lord has made me. Because I am so ungracious that I cannot express it well when

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<sup>5</sup>Convent of the Visitation in Troyes.

<sup>6</sup>Anncy was in the diocese of Geneva. By contract with Commander de Sillery, Saint Vincent was undertaking the establishment of a house there for two priests and a coadjutor brother of the Congregation of the Mission.

I meet people, I most humbly beg you, dear Mother, to help me thank him for it and assure him of my obedience. And in your regard, dear Mother, since I am not worthy to give you proper thanks either for all the benefits we incessantly receive from you, I beg Our Lord, dear Mother, to do so Himself and to be our thanks. I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, dearest Mother, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Reverend Mother de la Trinité, Superior of the Carmelites in the faubourg of Troyes, in Troyes

392a. - TO N.

[August 29, 1639]

. . . A grain of charity suffices to calm many anxieties and ease many differences. . . .

393. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Wednesday morning [1639]<sup>1</sup>

I was consoled to see the letter from Angers and feel we should not put off sending the Sisters, although the contract is not drawn up. In any case, we shall always be ready. But I am worried about what you wrote concerning the rest. *O Jésus!* Mademoiselle, this

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**Letter 392a.** - Taken from Collet: *La vie de Saint Vincent de Paul*, vol II, p. 161. Date given by Collet. This edition uses the text reprinted in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, p. 22.

**Letter 393.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The Sisters missioned to the hospital in Angers left Paris in November. This letter precedes their departure by a short time.

is not the time. *Seigneur Dieu!* You create too much need in the world! In the name of God, do all you can to stay well and treat yourself better. If I can, I shall have the happiness of seeing you this evening, or else tomorrow, with the help of God.

Your son told me last evening that he was going to see the Pastor at Saint-Nicolas for the examination.<sup>2</sup> He seems definitely to have made up his mind. He did not come to see you because his long cloak got torn as he was walking along somewhere; he will have it mended. Perhaps he does not want to come and see you until he is bound to the Church, as he wrote to you. Be very cheerful, in the name of God. I am, in His love, your servant.

V. D.

I think you made a good choice with regard to those young women from Lorraine, and that the other older one you mentioned to me will do well.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

### 394. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1636 and 1648]<sup>1</sup>

Your remedy, Mademoiselle, produced its effect on me nine times. Waters have never done me any good during my fever in Forges or here. We shall try them, nevertheless. We have some here in the house for you, if you need any. My slight fever is, as you say, double tertian, but you know that at this season I usually have it double quartan and have already had it that way this fall.

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<sup>2</sup>Diocesan regulations prescribed that the ordinands take their examination from the priests of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet. (Cf. Schoenher, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 650.)

**Letter 394.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>Dates of the entrance of Madame Turgis into the Community and of her death.



You would do well to send for Madame Turgis.

Please let me know how many little girls are still left. And what are you doing for your headache? I really think that perhaps you still need to be purged a little.

I am very pleased with what you told me about your little suffering. Courage, Our Lord will be your consolation, as I beg Him to be with all my heart. Please do all you can in the matter.

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

V. D. P.

**395. - TO SAINT LOUISE**

[Between 1636 and 1641]<sup>1</sup>

I have to come to La Chapelle shortly. If there is any need for me to come to your house, please let me know. Otherwise, I would be happy not to come there at all, according to the decision we made in that regard in the beginning.

**396. - TO NICOLAS SANGUIN, BISHOP OF SENLIS**

Paris, September 13, 1639

Your Excellency,

The charity with which you are pleased to honor our little Congregation of the Mission gives me the confidence to request you most humbly to be so kind as to grant a dimissorial letter *ad*

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**Letter 395.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. III, chap. XX, p. 305.

<sup>1</sup>Dates of Saint Louise's stay in La Chapelle.

**Letter 396.** - Reg. 1, f<sup>o</sup> 63 v<sup>o</sup>. The copyist notes that the original was in Saint Vincent's handwriting.

*omnes ordines*<sup>1</sup> to Michel Dupuis,<sup>2</sup> an acolyte of your diocese who is also a member of our Congregation. He is taking his course in philosophy and has studied theology. By the grace of God, he is of good moral character and hopes to serve God usefully among the poor country people. It is that, Your Excellency, which gives me the confidence to present you this most humble petition, with all the humility and respect in my power. I here renew the offering of my obedience and am, in the love of Our Lord, Your Excellency, your. . . .

The young man has only a title worth one hundred or fifty livres. I hope to have him accepted with that.

### 397. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Good evening, Mademoiselle. Please reflect on the points I should cover tomorrow<sup>1</sup> and send them to me between now and eight-thirty this evening. Let me know also the state of your health.

I most humbly thank you for your gift. Please let me know which of the two rosaries was the one used by the late wife of the general.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*For all orders.* Saint Vincent was requesting one dimissorial letter to cover *all* the various Orders which Dupuis would receive in the future.

<sup>2</sup>Michel Dupuis, born in Ver (Oise), was received into the Congregation of the Mission on March 29, 1639, at the age of twenty-three. Although he was still a simple cleric in 1646, Saint Vincent was using him in the seminary of Cahors. It was a common practice for Saint Vincent to employ seminarians in various works of the Congregation. It appears that both a shortage of personnel and a need for practical experience on the part of some of the clerics necessitated this practice.

The *Notices* contain no information about Dupuis' ordination to the priesthood or his death.  
**Letter 397.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>In the conference that was to be given to the Daughters of Charity.

<sup>2</sup>Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, wife of Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, former General of the Galleys.

398. - TO SAINT LOUISE

. . . I wish you a good day, while my heart is still filled with consolation from the conference of our good Daughters of Charity. It seems to me that never have I more admired God's goodness or His guidance than I have done and am doing on this occasion. O Mademoiselle, who will grant us enough humility to consider our place at the bottom of hell if we are not faithful to His eternal designs by serving Him as He wishes, and if we do not abandon ourselves entirely to His most admirable and most amiable guidance!

399. - TO SAINT LOUISE

If you wish me to have the happiness of seeing you during your illness, let me know. I have imposed on myself the law of not coming to see you unless I am summoned for some necessary or very useful matter.

400. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Friday morning

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have never seen a mother so much a mother as you; you are hardly a woman at all in anything else. In the name of God,

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Letter 398. - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

Letter 399. - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. III, chap. XX, p. 306.

Letter 400. - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

Mademoiselle, leave your son to the care of His Father, Who loves him more than you do or, at least, do away with your anxiety about him. I am going to send someone to the Bons-Enfants, as if nothing had happened, to find out how the matter stands, and I shall let you know.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

401. - TO MOTHER DE LA TRINITE

Dearest Mother,

The grace of the union of the hearts of Jesus Christ be with you!<sup>1</sup>

I received the letter you were pleased to send me and most humbly thank you for it and for all the kindnesses your dear soul chooses to exercise towards my own, which is so wretched, and towards this poor Company. I beg Our Lord, Who has given you such an abundant share in His spirit, to increase it infinitely in you as your recompense. I am sorry, dearest Mother, for the pain I have given you reason to have on the occasion of this difficulty. But then, charity is patient. O dear Mother, what reason you have to expect a beautiful jewel in your crown for the patience you are practicing towards us in this matter! That is also the prayer, dear Mother, that I offer to Our Lord; and of you, I ask that you not grow weary of bearing with us in the suffering you are experiencing on our account.

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**Letter 401.** - Archives of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice in Paris, an old copy authenticated March 12, 1772, by the Bishop of Cydom.

<sup>1</sup>In the French text the sentence does not make sense; the copyist evidently read it incorrectly. The original may have read: "The grace of the union of hearts *in* Jesus Christ be with you" or "The grace of the union of the hearts of Jesus Christ *and of Mary* be with you."

M. Dufestel sent me word that the Commander, in his goodness, is setting aside his own feelings to accommodate himself to my wretchedness;<sup>2</sup> I am to have the Attorney General<sup>3</sup> write and he will speak to the Magistrates immediately. I entreat you, dear Mother, to thank him for me, as I do with all the humility in my power. Tell him that I rank this favor among the greatest I have ever received from him. Tell him also that in two or three days I shall have the happiness of going to see the Attorney General in the country, where he is at present. I shall ask him to write the way the Commander directed M. Dufestel to have the letter written.

Our Missionaries assigned to the Geneva diocese are beginning to gather together, I mean one of them, from the illness from which he is recovering.<sup>4</sup> I hope he will be able to leave at the latest around the tenth of October.<sup>5</sup>

I entreat you, dear Mother, to express our apologies to the Commander for the delay. Be assured that my soul is filled with gratitude for our obligations to you and that you will be, dear Mother, in time and in eternity, and I as well, in the love of Our Lord. Your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, September 27, 1639

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<sup>2</sup>The Commander de Sillery, at first reluctant to ask the city to allow the establishment of a house of Missionaries in the faubourg of Troyes, finally yielded to the Saint's reasons and insistence.

<sup>3</sup>Mathieu Molé.

<sup>4</sup>This sentence is unintelligible due to a poor reading by the copyist.

<sup>5</sup>According to the foundation contract, Saint Vincent was to send two of his priests to Annecy before September 15. It is evident here that circumstances beyond his control delayed their departure.

402. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

We must act against what is painful and either break our heart or soften it to get it ready for anything. It seems that Our Lord wants to take a hand in the Little Company. It belongs entirely to him, I hope, and He has the right to use it as He pleases. As for me, my greatest desire is to wish only the accomplishment of His holy Will. I cannot tell you how far advanced our patient<sup>1</sup> is in that practice, and that is why it seems Our Lord wants to put him in a place where he can continue it more happily for all eternity. Oh! who will grant us the submission of our senses and our reason to that adorable Will! The Creator of the senses and of reason will do so, if we make use of them only in Him and for Him. Let us pray that you and I may always have one and the same will and non-will with Him and in Him, since such is an anticipated Paradise beginning in this life.

403. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 9 or 10, 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I most humbly thank you for the care you take of me. My slight

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**Letter 402.** - Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. III, chap. V, sect. I, p. 37.

<sup>1</sup>It seems that this patient, "one of the principal priests" of the "Congregation and one of the most useful," says Abelly, was one of those who collaborated with Saint Louise. It might well have been Jean de la Salle who died in Paris on October 9, 1639. M. Pémartin thinks that this letter was written on the occasion of Antoine Portail's illness in 1660. That is not likely because Saint Louise was close to death herself at that time.

**Letter 403.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written either the day of Jean de la Salle's death, or the day after.

fever is tertian; this is the third attack. It came upon me the evening I had the pleasure of seeing you, because I went down to the refectory immediately after vomiting the little remedy I took. The first attack left me completely sleepless. The day after and from then on I have induced sweating, which has caused the attacks to diminish, and I have been bled twice, so that the attack I am having now is very mild. Our doctor thinks I should be purged next Wednesday. Please have the dose prepared for us. The one you sent recently had no effect — not the one M. Blatiron<sup>2</sup> took; he has left with the Bishop of Alet,<sup>3</sup> for he was much better from it.

Thank you for notifying me about the infirmary and for sharing our sorrow. I recommend our Brother Alexandre<sup>4</sup> to you; he will receive Extreme Unction this evening, along with the Prior's<sup>5</sup> servant. The others are well, thank God.

I was most consoled yesterday to learn that you are feeling better. I beg God to restore the strength you need for all the work Our Lord is preparing for you.

I shall say just a word to you about the loss we have experienced in the late M. de la Salle and the one we are in danger of suffering. By the grace of God, my heart is at peace about it, seeing that it is God's good pleasure. I am sometimes a little afraid that my sins

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<sup>2</sup>Etienne Blatiron, Priest of the Mission, was born in Saint-Julien-Chapteuil (Haute-Loire) on January 6, 1614. He was received into the Congregation of the Mission on January 6, 1638, ordained a priest in 1639, and placed in Alet (1639-1641), Saintes (1641), Richelieu, Rome (1644-1645), and Genoa (1645-1657). He especially distinguished himself in the latter position where as Superior of a new house he had to organize everything. Saint Vincent considered him one of the most competent of his Missionaries and "a very great servant of God." (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 70.) Etienne Blatiron died in Genoa, July 24, 1657, a victim of his dedication to the plague-stricken. His biography was published in vol. II of the *Notices*, pp. 151-203. In the Lyons manuscript there is a report on his virtues addressed to Saint Vincent.

<sup>3</sup>Nicolas Pavillon was consecrated Bishop on August 22 in the church of Saint-Lazare. Saint Vincent had promised to accompany him to his diocese but was not able to do so. The new Bishop left Paris on October 8, accompanied by Etienne Blatiron, who was to direct his seminary. E. Dejean describes the events of this trip (cf. *op. cit.*, p. 17).

<sup>4</sup>Alexandre Véronne.

<sup>5</sup>Adrien Le Bon.

are its cause, but seeing even in that the good pleasure of God, I accept it with all my heart and am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

404. - TO LOUIS LEBRETON, IN ROME

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter of September 13 and a few others before that, which I have answered since my return from Troyes. I repeat to you in this one that I have asked the Pastor of Saint-Leu,<sup>1</sup> who compiled the French martyrology,<sup>2</sup> to give me the notes he has on Saint Veneranda.<sup>3</sup> Before this letter leaves, I shall have someone see him again to ask him to send me what he has and I shall send it to you by the same means.

As for the expenses of the missions, please take care of them when you go on one, even for that good priest from Siena as well, unless he insists to the contrary.

With regard to the litanies of Jesus, I would like you to get

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**Letter 404.** - The original autograph letter was made available to Coste by M. Gloutier, vice-president of the hospitals of Langres.

<sup>1</sup>André du Saussay, born in Paris around 1589, was a doctor in both laws, a talented controversialist, a renowned orator, a prolific writer, and the Pastor of Saint-Leu and Saint-Gilles (1624-1656). He found favor with the King who made him his counselor and preacher. He became ecclesiastical judge and Vicar General of Paris (1643-1655). Proposed by the Queen Regent as candidate for the episcopal see of Toul in 1649, he was not approved by the Pope until 1656. He governed his diocese wisely and died on September 9, 1675, after meriting the praise engraved on his tomb: *vir clero et populo amabilis* [a man beloved by the clergy and the people]. (Cf. Martin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 236 ff.)

<sup>2</sup>*Martyrologium Gallicanum*, Paris, 1638, 2 vols., a work of no historical value.

<sup>3</sup>Saint Veneranda was beheaded in Rome on November 14 during the persecution of Antoninus.



permission to say them in common in the morning *media voce sine cantu*,<sup>4</sup> as we are accustomed to do.

When I spoke to you about sending you some Missionaries, it was just a mere proposal. It would be impossible for us now that we have increased the number of Missionaries in Aiguillon,<sup>5</sup> have given four to begin the foundation in Alet, and are also going to send another four to the Geneva diocese where Commander de Sillery has made a foundation. And besides the Missionaries in Toul, we have sent men to Nancy, Verdun, and Bar-le-Duc, and are going to send others to Metz to assist corporally and spiritually the poor country people who have been given refuge in those cities. We are assisting them corporally by distributing five hundred pounds of bread to them a month in each town; that amounts to twenty-five hundred livres which we must find every month. By the grace of God, it has not been lacking up to now and so I hope we shall not fail to have it; at least we have enough funds for this year. We are assisting them spiritually by teaching them everything necessary for salvation. We have them begin by making a general confession of their entire past life and then continue to confess every two or three months.

Brother Mathieu,<sup>6</sup> who is working wonders in that regard by a very special grace Our Lord has given him, thought it would be well to bring as many of those people as possible into France. He brought in a hundred last month, among whom were forty-six young women — some from good families, and others. He fed them and accompanied them right into this city where the greater number have already been placed. In the meantime, they are being fed in a house where the city foundlings used to be cared for. A few good ladies<sup>7</sup> are doing marvels to assist us in this.

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<sup>4</sup>*In a medium tone of voice and without chant* — spoken, not sung.

<sup>5</sup>Or rather La Rose, near Aiguillon.

<sup>6</sup>Brother Mathieu Regnard was working in the Duchy of Lorraine (Nancy, Metz, etc.), which at this point of history was neither within the national boundaries of France nor part of the French nation.

<sup>7</sup>Especially the Duchesse d'Aiguillon.

Given all these circumstances, you can see quite well, Monsieur, that we cannot possibly send you any assistance at present; when we can, we shall do so. We are going to send twelve or thirteen to those parts.

That news will console you, but here is some that will greatly sadden your dear heart: hearing about our good deceased M. de la Salle's passing away. He went to God on the feast of Saint Denis<sup>8</sup> between three and four o'clock in the morning as a result of purpura. During his illness, he was so attached to the Will of God that he never departed from it, so that it can be said his death was an echo of his life. The day before he died, in order to die naked, he took off his shirt with so much decency that everyone was astonished that a body which had not stirred for two days had been able to do it. In fact, I asked him why he had stripped himself and he gave me an inarticulate answer that I could not understand. M. Dehorgny told us that he thought he had done it in imitation of Saint Francis<sup>9</sup> or, rather, of Our Lord, because last year he had seen him greatly moved by that gesture of Saint Francis the day we were reading his life.

Our Lord seems unwilling to stop there because, while I am writing this, we have two of our brothers at the point of Extreme Unction, one of whom is our dear and admirable Brother Alexandre.<sup>10</sup> I commend to your prayers the dead and the living and beg you to hurry to obtain that privileged altar for us with the dispensation from the stipulated number of nine Masses. Usually fifteen to twenty are said, but it sometimes happens, when people go on missions, that only five or six priests are here. The Cardinal<sup>11</sup> just sent someone here to the house to find out if we have one, with an order to have Masses said on it for the late Cardinal de la Valette.

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<sup>8</sup>October 9.

<sup>9</sup>Saint Francis of Assisi.

<sup>10</sup>Brother Alexandre Véronne. He recovered and lived until November 18, 1676.

<sup>11</sup>Cardinal de Richelieu.

*Mon Dieu, Monsieur*, how long it is taking to present that petition!<sup>12</sup> I beg you, Monsieur, to hurry it; and, whatever that good prelate and a number of others may say, *standum est proposito*.<sup>13</sup> I just discussed the matter with good M. Callon who thinks, as I do, that the matter is absolutely necessary. He told me such favorable things on the subject that my heart was quite touched. Among others, he mentioned the argument of Saint Thomas: *quae applicantur primo et ultimo debent esse immobilia*.<sup>14</sup> The good M. Callon is a doctor in Theology who works constantly on the missions near Aumale. See to it, therefore, Monsieur, I beg of you. I do not know whether it would have been desirable for you to have applied to Cardinal Antonio<sup>15</sup> in the first place, or whether the individual you know does not intend to make a milch cow of the matter so as to get more money or some equivalent service. Would to God you had some other means at hand to attain our goal; that is M. de Cordes' thinking, provided it could be done without spoiling anything! This is said for your ears alone and never for anyone else. But if you think it risky to change means, *in nomine Domini*, hold on to the one you have. You see, Monsieur, we are mortal. I cannot go on with this for long because next April I shall enter my sixtieth year.<sup>16</sup> Add to that the mishaps that may occur. The doctor just left me; he just told me M. Dehorgny has a fever. As for the one I have at present, it is my usual one.

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<sup>12</sup>This petition pertained to the organization of the Congregation of the Mission, into which the Founder wanted to introduce the practice of vows.

<sup>13</sup>*Let the plan remain as it is.*

<sup>14</sup>*What is applied to the first and the last must be unchangeable.*

<sup>15</sup>Antonio Barberini, nephew of Pope Urban VIII, was only twenty when he entered the Sacred College 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.

<sup>16</sup>Saint Vincent would therefore have been born in 1581, five years later than the date previously accepted by most of his biographers, and his age would not be that engraved on his tombstone. We shall not attempt here to elucidate the historical problem which this discrepancy raises; we shall simply note that the Saint was never inconsistent. If we take into account the fact that, when he spoke or wrote, the current year was always considered completed, his divers statements on this matter (we count twelve of them) are all in perfect agreement. (Cf. the

I am more touched than I can say about your fortunate meeting with that good priest from Siena. O Monsieur, how thoroughly so I would be if the goodness of God were pleased to unite him to you in spirit! I say that *positis ponendis*;<sup>17</sup> I think Our Lord grants me the mercy of not wanting men except when His Providence draws them. Alas! Monsieur, how vain and blameworthy our desires are! I beg Our Lord, however, to bestow His blessing on the new life you are about to begin together in your house and on the mission where I am confident you now are. I dare to take the liberty of greeting him most humbly, with all the respect and reverence I owe him, and I recommend myself to his holy prayers. I likewise greet the other good priest you mentioned who will perhaps make the third in your group.

You have spoken to me about Father Garanita in almost every letter and about all the good he is doing, but I do not know if you told me to what Order he belongs. Be that as it may, I can only praise God for the grace He is bestowing on you and also for the kindness shown you by that good prelate who runs the priests' academy. I beg Our Lord to shower more and more blessings on them.

*Jésus!* Monsieur, how consoled I am by the report you presented in order to obtain the faculty for working and for the indulgences for the Company! Please send it to me as soon as you receive it. O Monsieur, how moved I am by the favor Cardinal

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letter of July 25, 1640, to Pierre Escart; of November 21, 1642, to Bernard Codoing; of September 17, 1649, to Etienne Blatiron; of April 27, 1655, to Pope Alexander VII; of July 15, 1659, to Cardinal de Retz; of August 24, 1659, to François Feydin; the repetition of prayer on November 3, 1656; and the conferences of January 6 and June 15, 1657, to the Daughters of Charity.) On April 17, 1628, consistent with his belief, he told the judges appointed to inquire into the virtues of Saint Francis de Sales that he was almost forty-eight years of age and on March 31, 1639, in his written statement concerning Saint-Cyran, he stated that he was almost fifty-nine. Those around him were of the same mind since, at the end of 1659, Father de Gondi speaks of his being seventy-nine years old (cf. letter of the Chandénier brothers to Saint Vincent, September 10, 1659 — vol. VIII, no. 2973) and his secretary, Brother Louis Robineau, in a manuscript compiled after 1660 (Arch. de la Mission, p. 85), calls him "an old man of almost eighty."

<sup>17</sup>*With due reservation.*

Bagni did for you in that regard, and how I beg God with all my heart to preserve him for many long years! I shall tell you two things about him: first, I have never seen a goodness more closely approaching that of Francis de Sales, the Bishop of Geneva, than his; second, I deeply cherish his portrait and have no other than his and that of our blessed prelate. I entreat you, Monsieur, to assure him of my obedience, to take care of your health, and to assist me by your prayers to obtain mercy for myself before His Divine Majesty. Ask Him for the grace to live better in order to die well as did Madame Goussault, the President's wife. She made a holy use of the long and painful illness which preceded her death and died with joy and jubilation.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, October 12, 1639

*Addressed:* Monsieur Marchand, Banker at the Court of Rome, to be kindly delivered to Monsieur Lebreton, Priest of the Mission, in Rome

405. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

[October 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Courage, Monsieur, raise your heart to God and receive in acquiescence to His good pleasure the sad news I am about to give you. It has pleased the Divine Goodness to take to Himself good Monsieur de la Salle. He died of purpura on the feast of Saint Denis,<sup>2</sup> between three and four o'clock in the morning on the

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Letter 405. - Lyons manuscript.

<sup>1</sup>Month and year of Jean de la Salle's death.

<sup>2</sup>October 9.

fourteenth day of his illness. His death corresponded to his life. His acceptance of the good pleasure of God was constant from the beginning of his illness right to the end, without any contrary thought at all. He had always feared death, but, as he saw from the start that he was contemplating it with delight, he told me that he was going to die with pleasure because, he said, he had heard me say that at the end God takes away the fear of death from those who have feared it during their life and who have practiced charity towards the poor.

I cannot tell you the devout sentiments he has left in the Company. We were in retreat then and, at the sharing of prayer, each man told what he had heard him say that was most edifying and spoke of the virtues he had seen him practice, all of which gave us reason to hold conferences on the same subject. We held the first the day before yesterday and will continue next Friday. You cannot imagine the effects of that conference. I had objected to it, but, whereas it is the mind of the Church that we converse about the virtues of those who have died in the Lord, and whereas for that purpose she has established notaries to collect and make known the combats of martyrs and the holy deeds of confessors, the funeral orations given in Paris for the great and for all sorts of people in Provence and Languedoc — in some places over the grave at one's burial, or on a Sunday, or after dinner the day of the funeral — I thought we could do the same with profit and I am consoled by it. I even want the practice continued in humility and Christian charity. I think there is reason to hope that some people will correct their failings and others will be encouraged in virtue. One of those who spoke the day before yesterday said that, by the grace of God and by the prayers and example of the deceased, he had made up his mind to do something important for which he had no inclination before. I think, Monsieur, that you would do well to hold a conference at your house. The first point could be the reasons for our conversing about the virtuous words and good deeds we have observed in the deceased; the second point, the words you heard him say; the third point, the deeds.

406. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 13, 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I most humbly thank you for your good remedy; I took it yesterday and it worked three times. Our doctor thinks that I should take a dose again tomorrow with some rosepale syrup.<sup>2</sup> I most humbly ask you to do me this second favor and to send me another dose this evening.

I still have my slight fever. Our Brother Alexandre<sup>3</sup> gives us some hope, and the other brother as well. The first still has a little to fear tomorrow, which is his fourteenth day. Monsieur Dehorgny is ill with a colic and a little fever.

This slight indisposition will give me the means to reflect a little more on our concerns about the Charity. Afterwards, if Our Lord grants me life, we shall work at it in good earnest. Your letter the day before yesterday let me see some slight reluctance in your mind about it. *Mon Dieu!* Mademoiselle, how fortunate you are to possess the antidote for eagerness! The works God Himself is accomplishing are never spoiled by the inactivity of men. Please trust in Him and that I am, in His love, as much as Our Lord wills, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

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**Letter 406.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>This is the date which follows from the comparison of this letter with no. 403. The Saint says here that he took the medicine the day before. He wrote on October 9 or 10: "Our doctor thinks I should be purged next Wednesday." The following Wednesday was the twelfth, therefore, he must have written this letter on Thursday, the thirteenth.

<sup>2</sup>An astringent syrup.

<sup>3</sup>Alexandre Véronne. He recovered completely.

407. - TO BENOIT BECU, IN RICHELIEU

Paris, October 28, 1639

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

God's Providence has cast His eyes on you to go and serve Him at Notre-Dame de La Rose, in the diocese of Agen,<sup>1</sup> where Messieurs Brunet and Savinier are at present.

I am sending you a secret report which you shall communicate to no one but M. Lambert.

The newness of the duty will give you cause for apprehension. Remember that Our Lord will be your guidance and your guide and that you can do all things with Him. Jeremiah was a child who knew only how to say to God: *Domine, nescio loqui*,<sup>2</sup> and yet God intended to make use of him in the most important plan His Majesty had at that time for His people. You have reason to hope for the same graces bestowed on him if, like him, no matter what people do, you respond to your vocation in his spirit of humility. I hope for this from His goodness and from the recognition you seem to have of your unworthiness and inadequacy. I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

M. Bécu,<sup>3</sup> who in Nancy is called M. de Montigny,<sup>4</sup> is well and is working wonders for about four hundred poor people whom he

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**Letter 407.** - The original autograph letter is in the Archives of the Mission (Paris).

<sup>1</sup>The foundress of the house established at Notre-Dame de la Rose was none other than the Duchesse d'Aiguillon. By a contract of August 18, 1637, she had given a sum of twenty-two thousand livres to support four priests. They were to give a mission in the cities, towns, and villages of her duchy at the time of the four principal feasts of the year and assure a daily Mass in their chapel for her and her family. (Cf. Arch. Nat. MM 584.)

<sup>2</sup>"Ah, Lord God!" I said, "I know not how to speak." Jer. 1:6. (NAB)

<sup>3</sup>Jean Bécu.

<sup>4</sup>There is no available information to explain this statement of Saint Vincent.



is nourishing corporally and spiritually. Brother Hubert<sup>5</sup> keeps on doing better and better.

Your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

408. - TO LOUIS LEBRETON, IN ROME

Paris, November 15, 1639

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter and the formula for your petition. Having reflected upon it together with the present dispositions of their Excellencies, our prelates, we thought it advisable to accord to them the right to correct any errors the Missionaries make with regard to the people while they are giving missions. We shall also likewise accord them the rights of visitation and correction of any houses which become scandalously irregular, after they have notified the General about it two or three times, pointing out the scandalous irregularity which is to be corrected, and have given information concerning the irregularity. And because we are afraid that you may have difficulty obtaining the favor *dimittendi incorrigibiles*,<sup>1</sup> we thought it advisable to request that solemn vows not be made. Those who have<sup>2</sup> completed their two years in the seminary will make the four simple vows and those who have completed their first year in the seminary will make a good resolution to live and die in the Company in poverty, chastity, and obedience to the bishops *circa missionis* and to the Superior General

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<sup>5</sup>Hubert Bécu.

Letter 408. - The original autograph letter is at the Provincial House of the Daughters of Charity in Lille.

<sup>1</sup>Of dismissing incorrigibles.

<sup>2</sup>First wording: solemn vows and obedience to the bishops only after several years and that those who have. . . .

*circa disciplinam et directionem societatis.*<sup>3</sup> The latter may withdraw or be dismissed only after making a retreat. The others may likewise withdraw or be dismissed only after making use of every imaginable means to avoid coming to that end, only with the authority of the Pope or the General, and only in the cases which I shall indicate, as I shall everything that is contained in the present letter, in a report I hope to send you within three days. Therefore, please defer presenting the said petition. I shall answer in my next letter everything you asked me in yours. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Monsieur Marchand, Expeditionary Banker at the Court of Rome, to be given, please, to Monsieur Lebreton, Priest of the Mission, in Rome

409. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Richelieu, November 24, 1639

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The dysentery in this district is becoming contagious. The town magistrates just sent for M. Lambert, their Pastor, to see about the order to be maintained in the town with regard to the plague. It has broken out in three locations. That gives me good reason for asking you to postpone your trip, even though I sent word to Abbé de Vaux, the Vicar General of Angers,<sup>1</sup> that you could be there

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<sup>3</sup> . . . obedience to the bishops *regarding the missions* and to the Superior General *regarding the discipline and direction of the society.*

**Letter 409.** - The original autograph letter is at the Provincial House of the Daughters of Charity in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

<sup>1</sup> Guy Lasnier died on April 29, 1681, at the age of seventy-nine. He was one of the most remarkable ecclesiastics of Anjou during the seventeenth century. For a long time his only

around the beginning of next month.<sup>2</sup> Please wait, therefore, until we get back, Mademoiselle, and we shall see about it.

I have been in this town for two days and have seen Sister Louise in passing at the church. She is overjoyed at the hope of seeing you. I have not seen our Sister Barbe<sup>3</sup> as yet. Things are going better, thank God.<sup>4</sup>

I hope to leave this town in three or four days<sup>5</sup> and be in Paris around the tenth or twelfth of next month. I am, meanwhile, in the hope of seeing you there, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

The Sisters have stopped the visiting of the poor.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras.

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ambition was to satisfy his vanity and his passion for hunting and other worldly amusements. On February 29, 1627, he was appointed to the abbey of Saint-Etienne de Vaux in Saintonge; in 1628 he was named Vicar General of Angers, then Canon of Notre-Dame de Paris. In spite of the obligations imposed on him by these dignities, he continued to lead a very worldly life. In 1632, like many others, he was anxious to satisfy his curiosity as to what was going on in the convent of the Ursulines in Loudun. [It was rumored that some of the nuns were possessed by devils; Richelieu ordered the exorcism of the nuns and the execution of the Pastor, Urbain Grandier, for the practice of witchcraft.] He had cause to rue the day. It is alleged that one of the nuns, penetrating his interior life, revealed, to his great confusion, faults that he had never mentioned to anyone. From then on, he was a new man. In 1635 he came to make a retreat at Saint-Lazare and there he met Saint Vincent de Paul, with whom he remained in contact. He also had dealings with Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, Jean-Jacques Olier, Father Surin, and Baron de Renty. In his city, Angers, he established a convent of the Visitation, richly endowed the seminary, and founded the ecclesiastical conferences in his diocese. The Daughters of Charity of the hospital in Angers had no protector more dedicated or counselor more enlightened than the Abbé de Vaux. He gave hospitality to Saint Vincent, Saint Louise, and Jean-Jacques Olier.

We have only one of the letters Saint Vincent wrote to him (cf. vol. I, no. 416), but there are many from Saint Louise, about one hundred of them. (Cf. François Chamard, *Les vies des saints personnages d'Anjou* [3 vols., Paris: Lecoffre, 1863], pp. 279-303.)

<sup>2</sup>For the foundation in Angers.

<sup>3</sup>Sister Barbe Angiboust and Sister Louise Ganset had been in Richelieu since October of the preceding year.

<sup>4</sup>One of Saint Louise's letters (cf. *Ecrits spirituels*, L. 11) informs us that Barbe and Louise did not get along. Sister Louise was too independent and Sister Barbe was not cordial enough towards her.

<sup>5</sup>Saint Vincent was delayed in Richelieu until December 5. (Cf. no. 411.)

410. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[November 30, 1639]<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I cannot answer your entire letter; I lost it. Since Our Lord is urging you to go to Angers, go, *in nomine Domini*; what He protects is well protected.<sup>2</sup>

Besides, Madame Traversay is still having difficulty. That has made me think that perhaps Our Lord wants the work<sup>3</sup> to be done by itself and for itself without mixing it with another.

If you choose the Châteaudun coach, you will pass through Chartres and can make your devotions on the way.<sup>4</sup> From Châteaudun you will have eleven leagues to Orléans and perhaps less to Notre-Dame de Cléry,<sup>5</sup> where the river passes, or nearby, it seems to me. That way, you will avoid the cobblestones, except for three or four leagues near Orléans, where I advise you to go and pay a call. To get there, you will have to rent a trap in Châteaudun. The coach will not cost you anything for the trip; it belongs to this house.

I told our Brother Louistre to give you the places you request. He will leave on Tuesday. See if you can make it that day.

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**Letter 410.** - The original autograph letter, found among the papers of Jean-François Daudet, Priest of the Mission, after his death in 1807, was given to the Daughters of Charity of 80 rue de Vaugirard, Paris. The letter now forms part of the collection in the Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity.

<sup>1</sup>In his letter of November 24, Saint Vincent announces to Saint Louise his recent arrival in Richelieu and his intention of remaining there three or four more days. In this letter, written on a Wednesday, he speaks of his approaching departure. Since November 24 was a Thursday, there is no doubt that the above letter was written on the thirtieth. The Saint was no longer in Richelieu the following Wednesday.

<sup>2</sup>At that time the plague was ravaging Angers and Richelieu and, for that reason, the Saint had originally advised Saint Louise to delay her trip.

<sup>3</sup>Perhaps the work of the Foundlings.

<sup>4</sup>Saint Vincent and Saint Louise both had great devotion to Notre-Dame de Chartres; they made this pilgrimage many times to commend their works to Mary.

<sup>5</sup>Principal town of a canton in Loiret.

We have talked enough about the way to deal with those gentlemen, about who is responsible for changing the Sisters,<sup>6</sup> and that there will be no one else with them. I shall write to the Abbé de Vaux about it; he is the Vicar General who is handling the matter.

On your return, you will really have to visit the Charity in Richelieu, which is eight leagues from Saumur where Notre-Dame des Ardilliers is located. From Richelieu, take the coach to Tours, which is a good ten leagues from Richelieu. As soon as you arrive in Orléans, send someone to the port to find a boat, but do not take the express. In Angers, lodge at the address M. Grandnom<sup>7</sup> will give you. Have him and Madame Lotin write to her relatives and friends in Angers who will go beyond the wishes of the late Madame Goussault; she strongly enjoined them during her illness to assist you. Also go to see the Sisters of Sainte-Marie for me.<sup>8</sup>

I am sending you the little rule;<sup>9</sup> have a good copy of it made and change whatever is necessary. Perhaps I shall see you on your way back, in Tours or somewhere along the way. I beg Our Lord, meanwhile, to lead you by the hand Himself, to bless your journey, and to bring you back in perfect health. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Richelieu, Wednesday morning

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<sup>6</sup>One of the problems at the hospital of Saint John in Angers revolved around who had the power to assign Daughters of Charity to, and change them from, this establishment.

<sup>7</sup>Remi de Grandnom, intendant of Madame Goussault.

<sup>8</sup>The Superioress of the Monastery of the Visitation in Angers was Mother Claire-Madeleine de Pierre. She entered the Visitation in the first monastery in Paris where she was professed on May 28, 1623. She left this monastery in 1626 to enter the second monastery in Paris at the time of its foundation. She later was head of the convents in Angers, Tours, and Saumur, where she died in 1674 at the age of seventy-four.

<sup>9</sup>The Daughters of Charity have in their archives two drafts of this rule, the second written in Saint Vincent's own handwriting (cf. vol. XIII, no. 143).

Write me, if need be, by the express messenger in Fréneville. I shall be there, or around there, for two days. If there is any reply that is urgent, I shall send it to you at the Sisters of Sainte-Marie in Orléans.

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras

411. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[December]<sup>1</sup> 12, 1639

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I arrived quite late last night and read your letter from Saumur, the first of many. *O Mon Dieu!* how worried I am about you and your Daughters! I was expecting to find you here because of the cold you told me you had caught. We shall understand in heaven why Providence has treated you that way. In the meantime, I beg you, above all, to take good care of yourself amid the great dangers you will encounter in Angers.<sup>2</sup>

Here is the answer to what you asked. I would rather you lodged in the town than in the house<sup>3</sup> and I think it advisable for you not to accept anything for your journey. Our Lord will provide for it, if He wishes. It would be most desirable for the Sisters to be alone in the hospital; it is to be feared that the presence of that young woman might cause some difficulty. I was not told about that. We would have stipulated otherwise if I had known. However, it will

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**Letter 411.** - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

<sup>1</sup>The text says "November." There certainly must have been some distraction, which is obvious in comparing this letter with no. 409.

<sup>2</sup>The plague was taking many lives there.

<sup>3</sup>Perhaps at the hospital where she was to install the Sisters.

be difficult to make her leave now that she is there. What can be done? Your prudence will act as it judges best.<sup>4</sup>

I am very pleased that you took along little Sister Jeanne.<sup>5</sup> If you need some other Sister to return with you, you can send word to Sister Barbe to come and see you in Saumur, Chinon, or Tours with Sister Louise,<sup>6</sup> and to bring you the good young woman who introduced herself to me there so that she might belong to the Charity.

I am a little worried about your going to Richelieu because of the disease there. Our dear Sisters have stopped the visiting of the sick and the schools. The Monday I left, a little girl who had been at their school the preceding Saturday died. If you do go there, please stay only one day.

Your letter worked wonders for your Daughters;<sup>7</sup> they are happy at present and content, provided they see you. We left one of our priests and a brother there, off by themselves, to help the plague-stricken.

I think it is very good for Sister Barbe to visit the Sisters in Angers and I promise you, with the help of God, that I shall visit the ones in La Chapelle and, if I can, the Foundlings also.<sup>8</sup> I have not been able to see your son yet; I shall do so at the first opportunity. You may rest assured that I shall act on your opinions, provided you take good care of your health, which I commend to Our Lord with all my heart, being in His love, Mademoiselle, [your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL]

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<sup>4</sup>Saint Louise looked for another situation for the young woman outside the hospital, and she probably succeeded. (Cf. *Ecrits spirituels*, L. 12.)

<sup>5</sup>Jeanne Lepeintre.

<sup>6</sup>Barbe's companion in Richelieu.

<sup>7</sup>Barbe and Louise. On October 26 Saint Louise had addressed a letter of reproach and advice to them (cf. *Ecrits spirituels*, L. 11), which Monsignor Baunard reproduces almost in its entirety. (Cf. Baunard, *op. cit.*, p. 245.)

<sup>8</sup>The Sisters at the Foundling Home.

412. - TO NICOLAS DUROT, IN TOULOUSE

December 1639

I received your letter from Toulouse and thanked God for leading you there. I arrived in Richelieu two or three days after your departure and was very sorry not to find you. I made the visitation and looked into the state of affairs and what has happened there up to now. I entreat you, Monsieur, in the name of Our Lord, to return to the spirit He had given you at Saint-Lazare. No one has ever given greater edification in that house. I beg God to grant you the grace of giving as much where you are. M. de Sergis wanted you to the exclusion of everyone else, which should make you realize the esteem and affection he has for you. He sent me word that he would live like a brother with you. I entreat you, Monsieur, to honor the guidance of Our Lord in his person, to hold him in esteem, to have affection for him, and to obey him in that capacity. Oh! how sweet is the guidance of those who love and esteem us and what a great attraction that is for us to enter into their views! If we were truly mortified, we would be indifferent on that point. According to the rule of God's Will, we should prefer those who are most exacting to those who subscribe to our moods. Since I have seen you very fondly attached to the happy practice of the divine Will, I hope that, when your nature finds no benefit in the exactitude of a director, the faithful practice of the Will of God will help you, for love of Him, to bear with all the little difficulties which may come your way. They shall never be lacking, no matter with whom or where we may be. If we are often at odds with ourselves, how can we avoid little aversions, encounters, and alienations with anyone else? One of the principal acts of charity is bearing with our neighbor. We must hold as an irrefutable maxim that the difficulties we have with our neighbor arise more from our immortified moods than from anything else.



I am saying only this to you, Monsieur, although I could tell you many other things about holy charity. It is such a perfect state that he who has the happiness of possessing it is destined to live as in a little paradise in this world and to possess eternal glory in the next, etc. . . .

413. - TO BROTHER JEAN DUHAMEL, DEACON<sup>1</sup>

December 15, 1639

Dearest Brother,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Since I cannot have the happiness of coming to see you as I had informed you, I am asking you in these lines not to yield to the temptation which is trying to dissuade you from taking the holy order of the priesthood. To attain it you have done almost everything you have done since you came into the world. Therefore, please prepare yourself for it so that you may receive it at this ordination. If you put it off any longer, you will deprive God of the glory He would receive from it, the blessed of the consolation they would have from it, the souls in Purgatory of the relief they would receive from it, and the entire Church Militant of the graces you would obtain for it by your adorable sacrifice. What is worse, you will delight the devil because he will have had the power to dissuade you from doing all that good. To think you would be more fit some other time — *O Jésus*, you must not expect that. Never to

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**Letter 413.** - Autograph letter. The original is in the library of Châlons-sur-Marne, ms. 742 (Garinet file 405). The Coste text, citing Reg. 2, was incomplete and faulty. The original was first published in vol. XXXII (1935) of *Mémoires de la Société des Sciences et des Arts de Vitry-le-François*. It was later reproduced in the *Annales* (1936), pp. 696-697, and reprinted in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, pp. 22-23. This edition uses the text of the last-named source.

<sup>1</sup>Jean Duhamel was a member of the Congregation of the Mission. Ordained a priest shortly after this letter was written, he was placed in Annecy and left the Congregation in 1640. His will, dated April 18, 1643 (cf. Arch. Nat., M. 211, f° 1), reveals that he keenly regretted his departure from the Congregation of the Mission and his errors (cf. vol. II, no. 461).

go through with it — God keep you from having to answer for that before God. That would be burying the talent Our Lord has placed in your hand, in which case Holy Scripture threatens you with a horrible punishment. To say that you are not fit and never will be — I admit that, Monsieur, considering the infinite holiness of the work, but with regard to our wretchedness, trust, Monsieur, that Our Lord will be your competence just as He Himself will be the sacrificer with you. As for the rest of your difficulties, we shall discuss them later. I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

414. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN ANGERS

Paris, December 17, 1639

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Last night I received your letter written on the feast of Saint Nicolas.<sup>1</sup> It brought me great consolation after my worrying about the place where you might be and the state of your health. May God be blessed that you are in Angers and lodged in good Abbé de Vaux's house. I shall not reply in this letter to everything you asked me because I have not been able to see your Sisters in La Chapelle yet and the messenger is going to leave soon.

I wrote to you this week in answer to your letter from Saumur. I

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**Letter 414.** - The original autograph letter formerly belonged to the Daughters of Charity in the parish of Saint-Projet in Bordeaux. It is now in the keeping of the Priests of the Mission at the Berceau, near Dax. The Coste edition cited Pémartin and the Saint Paul manuscript, but these editions contained some errors. The text of the original was published in the *Annales* (1928), pp. 254-256, and was reprinted in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, pp. 23-25. This edition uses the latter text.

<sup>1</sup>December 6.

addressed my letter to Abbé de Vaux, to whom I allowed myself the honor of writing.<sup>2</sup>

Today is Ember Saturday, which obliges me to go and say Mass at Notre-Dame for the Charity. After dinner, with God's help, I shall go to La Chapelle, speak to Madame Turgis,<sup>3</sup> and begin to give the order for the Sisters you requested, but I feel we should not consider Marie from Saint-Germain<sup>4</sup> or the one from Saint-Paul.<sup>5</sup> I shall try to send you the others as soon as possible and shall give some thought to Madame Turgis. There is much to be said pro and con.

Alas! *mon Dieu!* what shall we do about Nancy; we need to send some Sisters there as soon as possible.<sup>6</sup> Yesterday I gave the Duchesse d'Aiguillon reason to expect someone. As for Henriette,<sup>7</sup> I still know nothing at all.

With respect to the articles, I think you answered well; there is no need to add any more of them. We shall look them over in a little while, during which time we shall give God's good pleasure a trial. You would do well to talk about the matter that way, it seems to me, and even to show their little rule of life to M. de Vaux and to anyone else he judges suitable. You would also do well in particular to strengthen the Sisters in their determination to keep the rule well and to obey the administration in the way set down in the said rule. Inculcate, both in those gentlemen and in the Sisters, the gravity of making any changes in it. The Duchesse d'Aiguillon mentioned that to me just recently.

Yesterday, Saturday,<sup>8</sup> I went to La Chapelle where I saw all your Sisters. They are doing quite well, by the grace of God. Madame Turgis is very pleased with them.

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<sup>2</sup>Cf. no. 411.

<sup>3</sup>Madame Turgis was taking Saint Louise's place in La Chapelle.

<sup>4</sup>Marie Joly from the parish of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois.

<sup>5</sup>Marie from the parish of Saint-Paul.

<sup>6</sup>The Saint could not send any until 1646.

<sup>7</sup>Probably Henriette Gesseume.

<sup>8</sup>Begun on Saturday, December 17, the letter was continued on Sunday, the eighteenth. Meanwhile, Saint Vincent had gone to La Chapelle.

Henriette is still at home. Her brother<sup>9</sup> came to say that, before she went to Saint-Germain,<sup>10</sup> she would come to La Chapelle. It is not advisable for her to go there. Someone else should be sent to Saint-Germain and she should be kept here in order to bring her to a realization of her fault.

I have some objection to sending you Madame Turgis.<sup>11</sup> I think it would be good to send you Geneviève<sup>12</sup>, who was with you when you were near here, or Marie<sup>13</sup>, who was at the Foundlings. If we send you the latter, the former will be sent to Saint-Germain, or vice versa. I shall try to have them leave within three days.

Your son is fine; I still have not spoken to him because of the quandary I am in. I am going to send for your Sisters this afternoon so as to have them leave the day after tomorrow, with God's help. I am, in His love, provided you take good care of your health, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

*Addressed:* Mademoiselle Le Gras, at the home of Abbé de Vaux, in Angers

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<sup>9</sup>Sister Henriette Gesseume had a brother, Claude (possibly the one referred to here), who entered the Congregation of the Mission in Paris on December 6, 1643, at the age of twenty-eight (cf. *Notices*, vol. I, p. 498).

<sup>10</sup>Saint Germain-en-Laye (Yvelines). The Daughters of Charity had been established there since 1638.

<sup>11</sup>Saint Louise had asked for her.

<sup>12</sup>Geneviève Caillou. She was one of the first Sisters sent to Angers. One of Saint Louise's letters (*Ecrits spirituels*, L. 19) tells us that she fell ill after three or four months there. She was recalled in 1644.

<sup>13</sup>Perhaps Marie Matrilomeau, who was among the first Sisters assigned to the hospital in Angers.

**414a. - G. PLUYETTE TO SAINT VINCENT**

*Monsieur,*

*Please continue to give to the present Etienne Pluyette the money which is due on the first day of the year for the Pluyette scholarship. He was pleased to receive six months ago what was due at that time. That is gratifying to us, as are you in not failing to pay him. I shall remain, Monsieur, your most humble servant.*

*G. Pluyette*

*Fontenay, December 26, 1639*

**415. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN ANGERS**

Paris, the last day of the month and of the year 1639

*Mademoiselle,*

So you are unwell by order of God's Providence. May His Holy Name be blessed! I hope that His goodness will be glorified again in this illness as it has been in all the others; that is what I am having people ask Him unceasingly, both here and elsewhere, wherever I am. Oh! how I wish Our Lord might let you see how willingly everyone is doing that and how moved the officers of the Hôtel-Dieu Charity were when I told them about it at a little meeting the day before yesterday!

I entreat you, Mademoiselle, to do all you can to recover your health and above all to spare yourself nothing. If you need money, good Abbé de Vaux will not refuse you while you are waiting for me to send you some, as I shall do if you let me know. As for your return, it will have to be in a litter; we shall try to send you one when you are able to travel.

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**Letter 414a.** - Autograph letter. The original is in the Arch. Nat., M 105 (Collège des Bons-Enfants). This edition uses the text published in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20, p. 25.

**Letter 415.** - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 58.

Your son came here yesterday to bring me your letter. It was a consolation to me, as you can imagine, because of what I had been told about you.

You now have in Angers, Madame Turgis, Barbe,<sup>1</sup> and Clémence,<sup>2</sup> I hope; they left here the day before Christmas eve on the Orléans coach.<sup>3</sup>

Things are going fairly well in La Chapelle according to your order. I send greetings to your good Sisters and I am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

416. - TO GUY LASNIER DE VAUX

Paris, the last day of the month and of the year 1639

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I cannot thank you warmly or humbly enough on the part of Mademoiselle Le Gras and on my own for the unparalleled charity you are extending to her and to her Sisters. I most humbly thank you to the best of my ability, Monsieur, and beg Our Lord, for Whose love you are doing all of that, to be Himself your thanks and your reward. I offer you all that I can do on earth for heaven and every act of gratitude in my power before God and the world.

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<sup>1</sup>Barbe Toussaint. She was recalled from Angers in 1644.

<sup>2</sup>Clémence Ferre. She left the hospital of Angers at the same time as her companion, Barbe Toussaint.

<sup>3</sup>The Daughters of Charity found the hospital in the most complete destitution. One of them wrote a short report which is still extant (cf. Archives of the Daughters of Charity); here are a few lines from it: "The poor in the hospital were so badly off that the townspeople would not be taken there. And if any of them were there because they had been forced to go, they would have white shirts brought to them from their homes or from their friends, for at that time there were thirty or forty patients, both men and women, and for that number three dozen shirts in all. . . . It was pitiful to see so much disorder and waste at the expense of the good of the poor."

**Letter 416.** - This letter, taken from the original which was then at the Hôtel-Dieu in Angers, was published in the *Revue de l'Anjou* (1854), vol. I, p. 211.

So that good woman has fallen ill. *In nomine Domini!* We must adore therein the wisdom of Divine Providence. I do not commend her to you, Monsieur; your letter reveals to me how solicitous you are towards her and that is what she wrote to me as well. I would like to be there to free you from the care your goodness is taking of her and from her concern about it. Our Lord wishes to add the jewel of that merit to the crown Our Lord [sic] is fashioning for you.

I am writing her a note. Please send her my letter, Monsieur, and look upon me as one whom Our Lord has given you and who is, in His love and that of His holy Mother, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL







## INDEX

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This index proposes to facilitate reference to the biographical data used in this volume and to the explanation of places and terms which recur frequently in the text and which have been explained in the footnotes when first used. Names of persons are in bold print, those of terms or places appear in *italics*. The accompanying numbers indicate the letters to which the reader should refer for the desired information.

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