I. LETTERS TO LOUISE (VOILLE) DES LOGES (SISTER AURELIA)

Louise des Loges was one of five girls who heard God's call to the apostolate of the much neglected negroes. These ladies consulted Father Tisserant with regard to their vocation. Father Tisserant was temporarily engaged in work for the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Victories in Paris, and he had become one of Father Libermann's chief collaborators in his work for the Negro. Louise later entered the Institute of the Immaculate Conception of Castres, a Society dedicated to the service of the negroes in the mission field. She took the name of Sister Aurelia. How Father Libermann carefully guided her during her early years in the religious life is seen in the following letters that have been preserved for us.

I

Letter One December 23, 1842 Vol. 3, p. 318

Glory to Jesus and His Holy Cross!

My dear Sister in Our Lord Jesus Christ:

I regret that I have been unable to reply to your letter before this. I am so eager to give you consolation that the thought of this delay broke my heart. I trust that our good Master will forgive me, as it was physically impossible for me to write to you.

Please do not, my good sister, allow this delay to worry you. I am sure that Mary, our very dear Mother, has compensated you for my silence. The fact that I have not written

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1References are made to the fourteen volumes of Notes et Documents relatifs à la vie et l'oeuvre du Vénérable François-Marie-Paul Libermann, Paris, 1929-1956.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

sooner should not prevent your writing to me whenever you think it necessary, or for that matter, whenever you wish to do so.

I earnestly desire to help you in the task of attaining holiness, and to guide you in the way of the divine love of our most sweet Lord Jesus. From now on, therefore, write to me every month or even every fortnight, and also at any other time that you feel that it will benefit your soul. It is not necessary that you should pay the postage on your letters. He Who feeds even the smallest animals will provide what is necessary for those who desire to serve Him. After all, whether your money or mine is used for the postage, it is always Our Lord’s money. Are the letters not written in the name of and for the love of that dear Master? So do not worry about the expense.

You wish that I should, henceforth, consider you as my child. Yes, you may count on it that I shall have a truly fatherly affection for your soul, and that I shall interest myself in it as a father interests himself in his child, and as a shepherd cares for the sheep entrusted to him. Open your soul with perfect freedom and peace. Join wholeheartedly in the great desire the Supreme Shepherd has for your sanctification. Have confidence in my words and guidance, because you can be sure that I fully adopt the Divine Master’s plan for your sanctification. May He grant me the grace of His divine light.

I shall do my best to see the workings of the interior life of your soul, and to guide you by means of God’s grace alone. For yourself, be pure in your views, your desires, your sentiments, in a word in all that takes place in your soul. Cling to Jesus who alone is the king and love of our souls, and do not become attached to me for I am but rottenness.

When I speak to you in a kindly way, do not say that I am good. When God is pleased (through me) to grant you
some ray of light, do not say that I have enlightened you; it is Jesus who gives you His light. When my words arouse good desires in your soul, do not say that I am a saint; it is Jesus alone who is the holiness of your soul. Belong only to Jesus, love only Jesus, live only for Jesus. But be docile to my guidance, see Jesus in me, and let every word of mine be for you the word of our most sweet Jesus.

When, with heavenly guidance, I notice faults in you, I shall point them out to you with the sweetness and vigor of Our Lord Jesus. Place yourself before Him, humble and mild, and ready to receive correction from my lips. Ask Him to change you, to make you use the means that will effect this change.

Keep constantly before your mind the divine Jesus as the bridegroom of your soul. You are His spouse, poor but loved. I am the bridegroom’s friend, who sees His goodness in the way He works in your soul. I am happy to see how He loves you and the great gifts He bestows on your soul. What a joy it is for the friend of this divine bridegroom, to hear His heart-to-heart conversation with His spouse! Your whole joy must consist in belonging to that most sweet bridegroom. Your soul must, as it were, plunge into His divine love and rest constantly on His bosom.

All my joy, too, must be in that divine spouse of your soul, and my satisfaction must be in seeing His goodness and love, and how pleased He is with you. I must do all I can to help this poor spouse to so adorn herself as to find favor in the eyes of the divine bridegroom, so that He may take delight in His spouse.

I shall now answer briefly the points you mentioned. On another occasion I shall deal with your vocation at greater length.

Do not be surprised at the fact that you have troubles of mind. It would be unusual if you did not have such troubles
in your present circumstances. The obstacles which you find in your path should not cause you any worry; the devil always obtrudes such obstacles on such occasions. The objections which people put to you are without foundation. It is false to hold that parents who wish to prevent their children from entering religion are doing God's will. We must obey God before everyone else and thus procure our soul's sanctification. Be at peace with regard to this and be quite sure that God's divine will for you will be done.

I believe, from what Father Tisserant has told me about your interior life, that you are not meant to live in the world, and that the good Lord expects more from you than from those whose lives are spent in the world. Some other time I shall speak to you about your vocation which comes to you from the good Lord. I feel that your break with the world will not be violent, and that you will not have to leave without the consent of your parents. The good Lord will arrange everything as He sees fit; let us put our trust in Him. I shall treat of this more fully in my next letter.

The story of the saints is full of examples of children who entered the convent in spite of their parents' unwillingness, and of parents who entered contrary to the wishes of their children. St. Jerome uses strong words about this: "Continue your march, leap over your father and mother." He even uses the expression, "walk on your father etc.," if they oppose your desire for sanctification. But, my dear friend, do not worry about all this. We have not yet reached such a pass. We shall use gentleness, and Our Blessed Mother will free you with all sweetness. Be patient for a while and you will find that everything will be settled satisfactorily.

Besides, since God's moment has not yet come, you must wait patiently. Let God move you this way or that as He pleases. Be like a toy in the hands of the child Jesus. He calls you, arouses good desires in you, and then puts obstacles
in the way of their fulfilment. Wait quietly with meekness and humility for the outcome of His divine guidance of your soul, and observe how tenderly He loves you. If He puts your fidelity to the test, it is because He wishes to give you greater graces and make you perfect. Place yourself in His presence with your soul at peace, and put aside any thought that causes you anxiety or worry. Do not be afraid, Jesus is not angry with you; He loves you and because He loves you, whatever happens to you is either willed or permitted by Him.

Be careful, my dear friend, not to leave Jesus. Receive Him as often as possible, with confidence and abandonment, into your heart. Never withdraw from Him; embrace Him with your whole being and let Him be complete master of all that concerns you. Rest peacefully on His adorable Heart and in the arms of Mary. Be happy that the good Master desires to place you on His holy cross. Do not worry about temptations and troubles; these will disappear and leave your soul more firmly attached to its God and Lord, Jesus.

Bear all with mildness, patience, peace and love. Realize that you are unworthy of the great favor of sharing in the Cross of Jesus and in the persecutions He suffered from the world and the devil. It is because you wish to belong truly to Jesus that you suffer such things; bear them, then, as would a soul that belongs to this Divine Savior. May our souls belong to God and Mary!

Your poor servant in the holy charity of Jesus and Mary,

Father Francis Libermann

P.S. I met Miss Lapique in Paris. Her soul is good and beautiful and I trust that God will sanctify her. Maintain your contacts with her, which give me great consolation.
My very dear Sister in Our Lord Jesus Christ:

May the peace of the Child Jesus, that was announced by the angels, fill your soul!

The state of true perfection is always one of peace. Troubles come usually, nay always, from a source that is not God. This source is usually either self-love, excessive self-indulgence, or lastly a too great eagerness to possess graces, perfection, or the gifts of God which we particularly esteem. The latter desire is good but it is nature, another evil principle, which causes that excessive eagerness, rigidity and tenseness in its pursuit.

When God acts in our souls, and we follow His divine impulses without intruding our faults and natural ideas, He always acts with peace, and it is this peace that enables us to recognize His divine presence. Peace and humility are always signs of the presence and action of His divine grace in our souls. Lack of peace and humility is a sign that our own nature, with its affections, sentiments and imperfect actions, has become mixed with God's holy inspirations.

From this you realize how important it is for you to establish yourself in that holy and humble peace before God, and to preserve it with humility and mildness, for your perfection consists in following fully those diverse impressions and impulses of grace. The more docile and compliant your soul is to the guidance of your heavenly spouse, the more perfect you will be, the more will you be enlightened by His divine will, strong in bearing contradictions, and the holier will
be your conduct both interior and exterior. On the contrary, the greater is nature’s share in your actions, the less holy they will be, the less pliant and docile you will be to the guidance of the Divine Child, the less supernatural will be the strength with which you will follow that guidance.

Strength that is born of nature makes the soul rigid and inflexible. The strength and vigor of grace bring sweetness to the soul and often give consolation even to those whom we are obliged to oppose and resist. Souls that come under that divine action of grace have sweetness and peace while still remaining strong and constant . . . Holy Scripture describes the action of merciful Providence as “reaching from end to end (i.e. from the beginning of its action to its fulfilment) with might, and disposing all things with sweetness.” Jesus’ divine action, vigorous yet sweet, will, some day, take place in the soul of His beloved spouse.

Be faithful, my very dear friend, to whatever the Well-beloved desires to do in you, and you will experience the marvels of His love for you and the incomparable sweetness of His mercy. Remain in sweetness, peace and humility before Him. Give your will earnestly to Him and abandon it entirely to Him. When you have once truly surrendered your will to Jesus, to will no longer belongs to you but to Jesus, and you must allow His divine will to guide and carry you away.

Pay close attention to this. Whenever you follow your own will, no matter how holy its object, rigidity and inflexibility will result, but whenever your will is docile and flexible before Jesus and you follow only the will of that dear and Divine Spouse, then strength and sweetness will fill your soul. Oh! how strong and sweet is that dear will of Jesus, the only love of our soul.

Remain in your poverty, weakness and entire nothingness before your Divine Spouse. Make Him Lord over your whole
being and acknowledge that you are His property. Consider yourself now as already His spouse. Though you have not yet made your vow, your soul must, nevertheless, be bound to this dear Spouse, and you must consider yourself as belonging to Him for ever, and without restriction.

Further, since you accept that you are the spouse of Jesus, you must yield to Him all the rights and authority of an ordinary husband. A pure and perfect love of Jesus should inspire you with a holy generosity in giving yourself to Him. In His boundless love for you, He will use those rights you give Him and will fill you with His holiness, uniting you more and more to Himself, and giving you an ever-increasing share in all the treasures of His heart. When you give up your rights entirely, Jesus will grant you all the favors with which He loads those most dear to Him, as a gratuitous gift of His love.

This heavenly union of Jesus with your soul will be accomplished in Holy Communion. It is there, also, that you must give your soul with all its powers to Him, and leave Him absolute Master over your will, desires, affections and all the movements of your soul. It is there you must remain in your poverty and nothingness before that beloved Spouse. He will pour grace into your soul like a river and fill it to the brim. Rejoice that He chose you to be His spouse. Be faithful to Him and be pure, so that in your soul, which He chose because of His excessive love and mercy, He may always find delight. Do not fear crosses and pains. The more of them the divine Spouse sends you, the more progress you will make in His holy love. It does not matter whether these crosses be exterior or interior ones; what does matter is that preserving your soul in peace and humility before God, you bear them with love as did our Divine Model. Submit your soul with sweetness, love and peace, to all the wishes of the most lovable Jesus.
LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

When we bear crosses in this way we merit great graces for the sanctification of our souls. Crosses, as it were, take us out of ourselves more and more, they empty us of ourselves and fill us with God; they make us receptive and docile to the impressions and impulses of divine grace; they make us humble and small in our own eyes and distrustful of self; they make us live in entire dependence on Jesus, our only love, and realizing that dependence, we are aware of our poverty, weakness, and wretchedness. Blessed are we when, thus destitute of everything, we realize our nothingness and weakness and are prompted to remain in perfect dependence on Jesus, who is the only foundation and source of all our strength.

With regard to your desire to give yourself to Our Lord in your holy vocation, follow the same method as in everything else. In general, violent movements are not according to God’s plan. It is God who is calling you; it belongs to Him to give you also the means that will enable you to carry out His wishes. I am certain that He will give you those means.

I realize that when you finally leave your parents, nature will suffer from this separation and you will cause them grief. But this is not a valid reason for refusing to follow your vocation. The pain they suffer will be a means of sanctifying your parents. Try to help them to offer their sacrifice like saints. On the other hand, to leave and break away from one’s parents in a way that will cause upset is not normally in accordance with God’s will. Before we permit ourselves to cause such a great upset, we must be certain that the sovereign Master wishes it so. When God’s will is not clear in the matter, we run the risk of acting from a motive of natural haste or from some other motive not inspired by God.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

Let us wait for everything as it comes from God's hand and expect nothing from our own efforts. Walk always with peace, mildness, and equanimity, though at the same time with vigor. Cling to God with all the power of your soul and follow always whatever God wants with mildness and sweetness.

Do not be afraid to write to me. I have already told you that you should write as often as the good of your soul requires it and you are in a position to do so.

May Jesus be everything for your soul and may Mary our good Mother give you constantly a share in the treasures of her most holy Heart.

Your devoted servant in the charity of Christ,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN

3
Letter Three January, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 78
J. M. J.

My dear Sister:

I should very much like to be in Paris during the few days you will spend there. This, however, is not possible. It is difficult for me to leave our small community. Only very grave and urgent reasons could excuse my absence. Besides, at present I am not well. If you could, on the strength of making a retreat, get away for one or two days and could come to see me, I would be very pleased. However, if this is not possible, let us accept God's will with all our hearts. I do not think that it is God's will that you should leave home just now. If I had known beforehand you were
coming, it might have been possible for me to have made the necessary arrangements. Since I did not foresee this, I do not know what I ought to do.

There is a convent in the South, whose Superior has written twice to me about our project. This is a new society which desires to work for the poorest and most neglected classes. The Sisters instruct young girls and take care of the sick. The society was founded three or four years ago and has twenty-three Sisters, and I have been told that their spirit is excellent and in accordance with God’s will. Their good Superior desires to work for the most abandoned souls in the missions. She heard of us and our work for the Negroes and she immediately sought to get in touch with me. She has already told me of her aims, and wishes to be united to us. I spoke to her about you and the other ladies who are eager to do the same type of work and suggested that she establish a house in Amiens. She said that she could not do so just now and the good reasons which she gave show her to be wise and full of the spirit of the Lord. She told me that you would be allowed to join her Institute and that you would spend one-and-a-half or two years in her convent so as to imbibe the spirit of the society; they could send you to Amiens later. I agree with that idea. It is better that you should enter a society that is already started than that we should start one ourselves. The difficulties at the beginning of a work are always considerable and are apt to discourage a great number.

The Superior intends to go to Paris in the near future and it would be providential if she were there while you are in that city. If this should not happen, the good Lord will provide. Place all your confidence in Him alone, preserve peace of soul, and aim at sanctifying yourself while waiting for the time when He will be pleased to fulfill His designs in your regard.
I received a letter today from Bishop Barron, Vicar Apostolic of Guinea, in which he asked me to send religious Sisters to his vicariate. I told him he would have to wait, but this shows you that there is an opening—the best one could imagine.

Five of our missionaries will go out to that vast country, which is still totally uncivilized. I believe that the good Lord has destined this new society of Sisters for work in that unhappy country. Those who go there will have much to suffer, but they will have an opportunity of doing immense good. Let us give a free hand to our divine Master and not try to interfere with His designs for us, which are to benefit the neglected souls He wishes to entrust to us. I can say, however, that we will not abandon San Domingo. At present I know nothing of conditions there but I am expecting information from Fr. Tisserant who is there at present. I hope that the good Lord will send us a sufficient number of generous and devoted souls to enable us to continue both missions.

I would write at greater length if I were not exhausted. Please pass on to Miss Lapique what I have told you in this letter. Discuss the matter between you and let me know your opinion.

May Jesus and Mary accompany both of you in all your good designs, and may the divine will be accomplished in you in all its fulness.

Your poor servant in the charity of Jesus and Mary,

Father Francis Libermann
My dear Sister:

I greatly rejoice in the presence of Our Lord, seeing that you are completely withdrawn from the world. From now on you no longer have anything in common with the world and can forget it altogether. I am not sorry that Our Lord abandoned you somewhat to your weakness, and allowed you to suffer anxiety before you heard how your parents had reacted to your entry into religion. From this you will see how little you can trust in your own powers, and you will thus be forced to place complete and humble confidence in Jesus, who is your all.

Yes, certainly, He is your all, and from now on you must live for Him alone. You will frequently experience His tender love for you. Keep your soul at peace before God. Do not be surprised that you are subject to distractions; you must expect to have all sorts of temptations in the novitiate. You belong to Our Lord and I hope that you will surrender yourself to Him ever more completely and without reservation. Distractions are not a sign that there is something amiss with you. Walk always with confidence. At times when you lack pious feelings, offer your dispositions to our good Master. It is not necessary for perfection that you should feel divine love and devotion for Our Lord. But it is necessary and also sufficient that you should be disposed to give yourself completely to that divine Master and live for Him alone.

You should try at all times to have the following dispositions:
i) Peace in the midst of pains and privations of all kinds. This peace should be based on confidence in Jesus and His divine love.

ii) Patience with yourself in the midst of your imperfections and in bearing also the imperfections of others.

iii) Mildness, which is the fruit of that peace and patience.

iv) Humility, which must be the basis of all the religious virtues, which God’s goodness will give you.

v) A low opinion of yourself. This should not be difficult for you especially at present, as you probably find many traces in you of the imperfections of which people in the world find it so hard to be rid.

However, while realizing how vile you are in the eyes of God and men, you must always preserve mildness and peace in your heart, and strive constantly in the midst of your poverty, for divine love in all things. Your wretchedness should never be an obstacle to your love of Jesus nor to a most perfect trust in Him. Since you see and feel how very poor and full of imperfections and weaknesses you are, you should feel more keenly your entire dependence on the divine Master. You must understand the immensity of His tenderness and mercy towards you, since, in spite of your shortcomings, He chooses you to belong entirely to Him. Therefore, “as the eyes of servants are on the hands of their mistress” so must you, while remaining little and poor, be firmly attached to Jesus and, in this attitude, always wait for His divine mercy.

As a beggar who will die of hunger, cold or thirst unless the Lord come to his assistance, and as one who is entirely dependent on His compassion and mercy, so should you be in the presence of God. At the same time be full of confidence
and love. Expect everything from His bounty and be quite sure that you will belong to Him and that He will guide you. I need not recommend the practice of obedience; this is the fundamental virtue of those who are consecrated to God in religious life. Let your obedience be mild, sweet, loving, complete and offered without murmuring or reflection, prompt and full of joy and gladness.

I am not surprised that your parents speak to you in the manner you mentioned. That one should renounce the world and all that is in it is puzzling to those who are subject to its laws. They call humility servility, mortification folly, divine love superfluous, the spirit of sacrifice (especially when religious devotion is allied with contempt for the world) mental exaltation, and thus they see everything upside down. Let them say what they please but let us surrender ourselves without reservation to the most sweet Jesus.

The good Lord will soon send you good Miss Lapique and another saintly person from our district. They will arrive early in April.

I have at last received word from Father Tisserant, who arrived safely in Saint-Pierre in Martinique and I hope that he will soon leave for San Domingo. Our good sister Rose Lapique sent me the letter of your pastor, and it pleased me very much. I saw Rose quite recently in Paris and she is more and more determined (to follow her vocation).

I promised you before your departure that I would send you a holy priest to encourage and console you in any pain or trouble you might experience. I wrote to him immediately after I had made that promise. He is Father de Rivières, and is pastor of Cordes. He told me that he would soon visit you and perhaps he has done so already. With regard to your money, as in everything else, do what your good Mother tells you.
SPRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBEMANN

May Jesus and Mary watch over you, may they guide your every step, filling your soul with the sanctity of Jesus and causing it to correspond perfectly with the most holy and merciful designs of that good Master.

Your most devoted servant in the most holy Heart of Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBEMANN
Missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary

5

Letter Five La Neuville, March 26, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 162

Jesus, Mary, Joseph

My good and dear Sister:

It gives me great consolation to see that Our Lord treats you with so much kindness and mercy. Do not worry, your interior state is not evil. Those impressions (you speak of) come from the grace of our Divine Master. Bear well in mind, what ought to be known to every Christian, that our unworthiness and infidelity do not prevent us from sharing in divine grace. It is true that you have not done anything to merit the favors Jesus bestows on you. Let this serve to teach you what you are of yourself and what you owe to our Divine Master. Of yourself you are but a fountain of troubles, anxieties, embarrassment, hesitation in the ways of God, self-love, sin, indifference for the Beloved of our souls. But Jesus took pity on you. He led you into solitude and spoke there to your heart. Listen to this dear Lord, and be docile to His divine voice. It is He who clearly imprints His love
LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

on your soul, and if you were very faithful and generous you would experience many more graces. Do not worry so much about your infidelities. Remain in your lowliness and poverty before Him and allow Him to do what He pleases in your soul.

Let the fact that you are unworthy to receive His graces urge you to be a little more faithful and generous. It is to this end that you have been granted these graces. Jesus, the love of your soul, wishes by every means to draw you to Himself. He saw that when He withdrew His graces, you were weak, poor and wretched and half-discouraged and depressed. This was not pleasing to His heart which is so full of love for your soul. He wants you to be His completely,—to be generous, humble, full of love,—and His infinite goodness has arranged things so attractively that it is difficult for your soul not to follow Him.

Be faithful then and abandon yourself to that most dear Lord. I am not afraid, my dear Sister, that you will lose humility on account of the sensible graces you receive. I feel sure that you will not be so foolish. Since you know how weak your soul is, you could not become proud when the good Lord Jesus floods your soul with favors and submerges your natural cowardice and weak character. Were you to become vain, you would be like a man who “has lost his head.” Therefore do not be afraid, God’s goodness will save you from such folly. Do not be surprised that Jesus is so good to you. He usually acts thus with souls, whom He wishes to strengthen and load with graces so as to rouse them up and, as it were, compel them by His gentle but powerful impulse to leave aside their lassitude to give up their faults and vices, and to go forward with greater energy and generosity.

I am sure that several good Sisters in your convent are experiencing or have, in the past, experienced such violent
emotions as you have felt. That these emotions cause you to feel oppressed is due to bodily weakness. You are not conditioned to bear the shock of Jesus' love for your soul. Yield to Him; allow Him to pour into you the torrents of His divine love, to carry you away with His impulse. Try only with gentleness and sweetness to conceal any exterior signs of what is happening in your soul. I know that this will be difficult and very often impossible but that does not matter. Our Lord will be content with your good will. Since the Sisters do not realize that your external actions on these occasions are due to bodily weakness, it is only right that you should conceal these from them; otherwise they would think that something extraordinary was taking place in you and this would have great disadvantages.

Do not be afraid of incurring guilt in the sight of God in the midst of these spiritual delights. Trust in Jesus and Mary, try to be faithful to these graces which are very great and which should dispose you to make progress in holiness. Though, now, you greatly desire perfection and your soul is filled with a great love of God, remember that you have all kinds of imperfections and faults. You will rid yourself of them later on when you have passed beyond this state of excessive joy. Although this state of extreme sensible graces does not free you completely from your faults, it does, nevertheless, help in weakening them. You ought, therefore, to thank Our Lord always for His goodness towards you, while at the same time you acknowledge your wretchedness in His presence.

You are now in the state of spiritual infancy and imperfection. Do not, however, despise this state or seek to leave it because of its low degree. As I have already told you, you need the graces of this state. Profit by the graces which the Divine Master gives you and use them to attain the further degrees of love of Him. Be always humble and poor before
LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

God and the Sisters. Be docile and obedient to your superiors as to Our Lord Himself. If your superiors tell you to do things which interfere somewhat with your mental prayer and exercises of piety obey without question. You must learn to leave God for the sake of God. I gather that your good Mother Superior is very kind and loving to you. It is possible that she may be spoiling you a little through not pointing out your defects to you; but I presume that she just humors you a little to avoid hurting your sensitivities; she wants to encourage you and she is right in that. Be strong and generous so that the Divine Master may be glorified through the goodness with which He favors you. I leave you in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

A Sister whom the good Lord sends you from these parts is bringing you this letter. She is good and of solid piety. Please help her to get acclimatized in your convent. I do not think that she will experience any difficulty in feeling at home there, as she is used to a life of recollection, since she practised it in the world.

May Jesus and Mary be your strength and consolation.

Entirely yours in their most holy charity,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN
Missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary
My dear Sister:

I rejoice with all my heart in the presence of our good Master because of all His kindness towards you, even though up to now you have not rendered Him any great service and may never be able to do so.

Your realization of your uselessness should not cause you sorrow. Remain in poverty and nothingness before Jesus, who wants to be all things in you. Offer Him your body and soul constantly to be sacrificed to His glory, whenever and wherever He chooses. Be prepared before Him as is a victim lying on the altar before the sacrificing priest. Desire one thing only—to be entirely at the disposal of our most sweet Lord Jesus. Surrender yourself completely to His divine good pleasure so that He may use you either for some work or to be immolated, sacrificed and annihilated for His greater glory. Then, if Jesus wishes to leave you in your uselessness, you must accept that you are the property of your Sovereign Master to be used and treated as He pleases. Accept, therefore, lovingly and peacefully your poverty, littleness, weakness and nothingness in the sight of your dear Master and when He turns you this way or that offer no resistance. Put your trust in Jesus and Mary, and be quite assured that your dispositions and state of soul are good. If only you are faithful and correspond to the love and kindness of Our Lord, then you will be able to sanctify yourself, to realize your fundamental poverty and wretchedness, to have a true opinion of yourself, and to acknowledge your true worth in the sight of your good Master and all the
Sisters. It will also enable you to overcome self, and to sacrifice your own tastes and likes to divine love. Your Beloved will even cause you to discard your own tastes so as to conform yourself to His.

In this state you will be able to bear anything painful sent to you by the divine good pleasure. You will know your faults, imperfections and weakness; and yet you will preserve through all this a union of love with Jesus and perfect confidence in Him. The more you accept your state the greater will be your union with and confidence in Him.

True self-knowledge which is a product of divine grace always brings with it an increase of love for God. It will make your mind and heart more simple, docile and pliant before Our Lord, and in your relations with your superiors and even with the other Sisters. It will make your will perfectly submissive and abandoned to the divine Will. Therefore, be humble, peaceful and docile under the guidance of the great Master Who wishes to take care of your soul.

The fear and shame you experience in your present state are not exactly evil, indeed they are usual in such a state, but you should not voluntarily yield to them. Through confidence in Jesus and Mary you can calm them. Every time you deliberately yield to them and entertain them in your soul, you commit a fault. The distaste you feel for conversation is not an illusion but a cross; it is not given you in order that you might yield to it but rather that you should try to overcome it by holding conversations when the Rule demands it, and also by charity. Speak as gaily as possible. Act in such a way that nobody may detect your distaste for conversation or your serious nature. It is because you must act in this way that I say this distaste is a cross.

When you experience those interior flames, simply allow yourself to be consumed by them and drawn to Our Lord. Pour yourself out and become filled with Him. The only
thing you should resist is the overflow of these interior feelings to your senses, in such a way as to deprive you of their use. No good result or virtue will come from this. All the good lies in the divine love and communication which takes place interiorly. The loss of feeling is due to a constitutional weakness in you; it is a sickness. Hence it is no lie for you to state firmly that you are seized by weakness. You were right in asking Our Lord not to allow these outward visible effects, but I knew beforehand that He would not grant your request. You must submit to His divine good pleasure. If He wishes to play with you and to have you suffer shame and confusion before all the Sisters, adore His will and submit to Him in all humility, peace and love.

I leave you in the arms of Jesus and Mary. I forgot to point out that you must not be fainthearted because of the shame and fear you experience in your present state. Turn frequently to your good Mother in a spirit of holy confidence and obedience, not in a spirit of pusillanimity and weakness. In your feebleness and littleness you must always seek help in Our Lord and not in the words of men. At the same time you should, in a spirit of obedience and with great confidence and affection reveal to your superior all that is taking place in your soul.

Entirely yours in the holy charity of Jesus and Mary,

Father Francis Libermann
Missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary
My dear child:

I have already answered your last letter, as I wanted to answer in a hurry and could not wait for further explanations. That is why I found it necessary to be evasive in my letter since I wished to put off my decision until the occasion of my visit. Since I recently received more details regarding your state, I am now in a better position to make a judgment. Besides, I’m afraid I shall not be able to come as soon as I expected and wished. That is the reason for this letter.

My poor child, take care not to allow anxiety to bore into your heart. You are certainly passing through a great and dangerous temptation. Place yourself in the presence of the Divine Master and return to that peace and docility which is inspired by divine grace. As you rest in His presence, you should be absolutely indifferent with regard to the means that are to lead you to the end that God has in view.

You want me to found a Congregation whose members would go to the Negro missions. Try to realize the difficulties involved in such a foundation. Suppose you had ten members—and that would be presuming a lot—you would then be established in a poor house which would be wanting in everything. One of you would be superior. Suppose two or three of you had temptations of the sort that you yourself now suffer, what would become of the community? Some would leave, and other troubles and trials would result. Think how this would upset the other members.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

You want "to form a small community", but what guarantee have you that it will be successful. Suppose that, say after two years, you had no applicants, what would become of your poor community? Its members would go to foreign lands and if they became ill or some other occurrence prevented the establishing of a community, they would be obliged to return from the missions. They would be miserable and then what would happen to the little society? Consider these matters in God's presence. Again, what prudent director of souls would wish to send members to such a society and what guarantee would you be able to give?

You want to establish a community, but whom would you appoint as superior? How would you establish that Congregation and its Rule? Where would you find the older Sisters who would set an example of the ordinary practice, at least, of the rules of the community? If a society is to prosper there must be harmony and order, in the beginning at least. It is difficult to have this especially when there are some members who are hard to handle and direct.

My dear child, you probably have some trouble in the community to which you belong and this is the cause of your anxiety. If you complain now you will be in a worse position when you become a member of a community just established. It would be almost impossible to expect subordination in such a community as you envisage, and without subordination a community is hell. Such a community will never do any great good and will inevitably go down. I cannot here enter into detail regarding the great difficulties that go with the foundation of a society. I remember having spoken about these in Paris, before her departure, to Rose Lapique. She realized these difficulties just as much as I did. Consider yourself blessed to have found a good community for the holy work for the negroes. It is, in my opinion, one of the greatest graces Our Lord has bestowed on that work.
If you have some difficulties, accept them as a devoted Christian soul must accept them, remaining at the foot of the cross and consecrating yourself to the glory of God. You should be devoured with zeal for the cross. What does it matter whether a pain be great or small so long as it is borne in the right spirit for the glory of the Master? Would you want to serve God only on condition that you would have nothing to suffer? Would you wish to enter on such a service and refuse to bear any pain? But, my dear child, if you now lack the courage to bear your present pains in your convent, your courage in bearing the trials you will meet in a separate and small community will be a thousand times less.

I can picture you saying that if God wants you in a separate community, He will know how to sustain you, to make you prosper and to send you postulants. But who told you that God wants you to form a separate community? Be quiet and peaceful, therefore, under the hand of God. I do not know where you got the idea that I intended to send you there for only a short time. This never entered my mind, nor did I ever say anything which could lead you to such a belief.

Remember what you thought in your calmer moments. You were always determined to remain where you are and to be sent to the missions by your superior. But now in temptation the demon alone puts these new ideas into your head. Reject such thoughts and forget them completely. Rose, Pauline, Therese, and Adele will bear me out that I never, by one word, showed any hesitation.

Once more then, speaking positively and formally, I say that you should not have any idea other than that of remaining where you have been brought by divine goodness. Prepare yourself, poor and small though you be, for the work He has in mind for you. Do not be unfaithful nor let temptation overcome you. Apply and devote yourself to your sanctification, accept your exterior and interior pains, bearing
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

them with love and preparing yourself for God’s service according to His plan.

Remember also that the greatest saints have undergone temptations and sufferings of this sort. They are even necessary on the way to solid perfection. I trust that, in God’s mercy, they are now over for you. Many saintly persons while undergoing such temptations fell into faults that were considerable. Self-love is at the root of such things and can go very far and lead to grave illusions.

Consider yourself blessed that you are still determined to belong completely to God. Continue thus and all will be well. Do not be surprised if that self-love which was for some time more-or-less in command, manifests itself in great or small things. This will pass by degrees. Submit completely to God and have no fear. He will be with you and Mary will not forsake you. Be constant, humble, mild, moderate, obedient.

I thought that your temptations resulted entirely from your fear that you would not be sent to the missions. Do not be afraid, it was for this purpose that your superior received you and she will not assign you to a work that is contrary to your vocation and the end for which you entered and were received. It would have been more perfect for you to submit blindly. If your superior sometimes said things to you that seemed to indicate the contrary, she probably did so to try you.

Humble yourself and remain at peace in your vocation.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
My dear Sister Aurelia:

You are quite justified in complaining about my silence but wrong in the conclusions you draw. I have already explained my reasons to the good Mother Superior and also to the wicked Sister Paula. I now want to explain to you more fully the reasons why I did not write especially at the beginning. I considered it absolutely necessary that you should all become detached from everyone outside your community and should become deeply attached to your own society, its spirit and its rules. I also wished that you should be guided exclusively by those who are fitted to impart to you that spirit and perfect you in it.

If I had told you this a long time ago, it would have caused you great sorrow and could have been the occasion of strong temptations. On the other hand, if I kept silence, your sorrow would not be sudden but would be spread out over a period, arising only occasionally and thus causing in you no ill effect. Its only effect would be that of detaching you from, and making you dissatisfied with me.

To act thus was hard for me, but the good which I foresaw would result from this dissatisfaction (which, I don’t doubt, you have tried in your heart to fight) was so great as not to allow me to miss such an opportunity. I knew that the more you became detached from and displeased with me, so much the more would you attach yourself to those who would henceforth guide you to holiness, and would also find your joy in a life of faithful observance of your rule and its spirit.
I can assure you that these were the motives of my delay in writing to you. To act thus was rather cruel on my part but I was motivated solely by my interest in your soul’s sanctification. Profit from this, I beg you, so that you may be more confirmed in the spirit of your vocation, and more closely attached to the way of life laid down for you and your Sisters by divine goodness. Be guided solely by your rule and by those who have acquired the true spirit of that rule. Do not allow yourselves to be influenced by those outside your congregation, even though you may have great confidence in such people and they, on their part, in the charity of God, be much interested in you.

I was greatly consoled to hear that Our Lord helps you to bear your crosses. Be humbly submissive to the divine will which crucifies you; love the hand of God that leads you with such severity. Have courage, this present life is nothing. The sorrows we suffer here pass quickly; this life is only a painful dream which will be followed by a joyful awakening. The more you suffer, the more detached you will become from yourselves and the world. This, at least, should be your aim.

You will learn your true value and how little you can trust yourselves, you will come to realize that your hopes must rest exclusively in God, in the grace of Jesus Christ, and in the goodness of Mary. You will then be profoundly humble and will depend on God alone. Have courage, God’s mercy towards you is great and in His mercy you will find the justification for full confidence with regard to your sanctification and salvation. When darkness and pain surround you, do not trust your feelings nor allow yourself to be influenced by depression or images of the imagination. Let your judgments be based on those of your superiors and practise perfect obedience.
LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

You see then that God wishes you to practise perfect self-renunciation. That is why He places you on the Cross. Once you have arrived at complete abnegation, all, or at least a great part, of your pains will disappear. Do not be occupied with self and avoid self-pity always. Turn your mind away from thoughts about your own state. Be content to abandon yourself to Jesus and Mary with complete confidence, and allow the superiors whom God has given you to guide you like a little child.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

9

Letter Nine December , 1844 Vol. 6, p. 464

J. M. J.

Dear Sister Aurelia:

You see how much consolation comes to those who are united in the charity of Jesus Christ. When they suffer they find mutual consolation since each one shares the sufferings of the other; or rather, on the occasion of their mutual sympathy, it is Jesus Christ Who, in His divine charity, becomes the consolation of each.

On the occasion of the recent losses of the poor peoples of Guinea, your good and charitable hearts, by the touching sentiments with which Our Lord has inspired you, have desired to comfort me. Continue your prayers to the Divine Master, beseeching Him to have pity on the wretchedness of so many millions of souls who are in danger of being lost
because there is no one to help them. Since you yourselves cannot go there, be with them in spirit and try to save them by your prayers. I do not forget them. I cannot get them out of my mind from the time eight months ago when I foresaw what would happen to them. I tried by every means in my power to prevent the blow, but God's hand is omnipotent and all my efforts were useless. Not one of my letters reached our missionaries. When God has decreed a thing our efforts to the contrary are futile. May His holy name be blessed and may His will be done!

Divine goodness has seen fit to hear our prayers for Father Tisserant; he has recovered his health or at any rate there is no longer any danger, and his convalescence will be shorter than expected. Pray always for Haiti. It seems that Our Lord wishes to save that country through Father Tisserant. He is a child of the Holy Heart of Mary and this good Mother leads him by the hand.

Do not think that I forget you and the other Sisters. If I do not write often, it is because I believe that the direction given them at the convent of Castres is more useful for their souls. It would be harmful to be directed, at the same time, by two different directors. And what more can I wish through the charity of Jesus Christ than the sanctification of your souls? That is why, while remembering you before God, I chose to remain silent.

I have no fears with regard to the present interior state of your soul. This state will not last always, nor, I believe, even much longer. You have passed through a very serious spiritual crisis. Many souls when they reach that point, either yield to discouragement, scruples and interior anxiety or they go to the opposite extreme—laxity. Obedience saved you. Our Lord, while allowing you to pass through that sorrowful state, has upheld you. A person in that state is like one suspended by a single hair over a precipice. In our case, how-
LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

ever, it is the hand of Jesus Christ that holds that hair and thus what seems but a hair becomes a thick cable which the combined efforts of the demons cannot cut.

Souls who are in this state and accept it in the right spirit, benefit greatly. It is necessary for us in order that our souls may be established in solid perfection. From it we pass on to a state of peace, calm and stability. As a rule we are then no longer carried away by fiery sentiments. Everything is more mild, gentle and calm. Sometimes there is but little feeling but the soul belongs more purely to God.

Strive then, my dear Sister, to profit by this state of soul which is a means to your greater sanctification. Such a state of soul is rather common and its fruits in the souls which God draws to Himself are solid and permanent. Consider yourself blessed to be able to suffer thus for the love of God; remain at peace in the midst of all these pains, submit humbly to God’s good pleasure, prostrate yourself before Him and allow Him to do with you and in you whatever He wishes. Be humble and little before Him and all His creatures, and especially in your own eyes. Esteem yourself blessed when you suffer some deep humiliation. If pride rebels, bow your head and abase yourself before Our Divine Lord. Be faithful to your mental prayer and your exercises of piety. You will accomplish much just by remaining in God’s presence and casting a glance towards Him from time to time. Your mental prayer can be judged by its fruits. Do not ask God for crosses but bear those sent you.

Remain prostrate before the Divine Master and at rest. Be very obedient, have a sweet gaiety, and be mild and peaceful in your conduct. Be moderate in everything and never do anything with the aim of standing out among others. With regard to your exterior conduct lead a simple common life. Interiorly, be completely dead to self. Do not be preoccupied with self but remain in all simplicity before God, not re-
flecting on yourself very often. Do nothing to attract the attention of others to you, whether favorable or unfavorable. Live at peace with yourself and your companions. Be unaffectedly humble and submissive to God and His servants, your dear Mother and Sisters.

Do not forget to recommend me to your Sisters.

I leave you in the peace of Jesus and Mary,

Father Francis Libermann