SPIRITAN COLLECTION
DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
The Gumberg Library

Congregation of the Holy Spirit
USA Eastern Province
DUQUESNE STUDIES
Spiritan Series
6

The Spiritual Letters of
The Venerable Francis Libermann

Volume Two
LETTERS TO PEOPLE IN THE WORLD
The Venerable Francis Libermann, C.S.Sp.
(1802-1852)
DUQUESNE STUDIES
Spiritan Series
6

The Spiritual Letters of
The Venerable Francis Libermann

Volume Two
LETTERS TO PEOPLE IN THE WORLD
edited and translated by
WALTER VAN DE PUTTE, C.S.Sp., L.L.D.

SPIRITAN ARCHIVES
U.S.A.

1963
DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Pittsburgh, Pa.
Editions E. Nauwelaerts, Louvain
DUQUESNE STUDIES
SPIRITAN SERIES


Imprimi Potest

Vernon F. Gallagher, C.S.Sp., Provincial
Pittsburgh, Pa., September 12, 1962.

Nihil Obstat

Donald W. Kraus, Ph.D.
Censor Librorum

Imprimatur

John J. Wright, S.T.D.
Bishop of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, November 5, 1962.

All rights reserved
© 1963, by DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
Printed in the United States by
THE AD PRESS, LTD., NEW YORK, N. Y.


**In Preparation:**

Francis Libermann, *Spiritual Letters, III, IV and V Spiritual Writings*

*A Spiritual Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*

**Duquesne Studies** comprises the following series:

Philosophical Series—Spiritan Series—Philological Series—Psychological Series—Theological Series.

**Twenty Percent Discount Is Given on Continuation Orders for All Series**
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Letters to Dr. and Mrs. Samson Libermann (1-45)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Letters to Mrs. Julie Libermann (46-47)</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Letters to Marie Libermann (48-68)</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Letter to Madame Perchais (69)</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Letters to Miss Rouillard (70-71)</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Letters to Mrs. Arragon (72-74)</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Letter to Madame Blanpin (75)</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. Letters to Madame Tisserant (76-78)</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. Letters to Madame Remond-de Goy (79-84)</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. Letter to Messrs. Daniel (85)</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI. Letters to Dr. Paul Drach (86-87)</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII. Letter to Mr. Levavasseur (88)</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII. Letter to Madame Delaplace (89)</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV. Letters to Miss Barbier (90-91)</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When Jacob Libermann, the fourth son of the Rabbi of Saverne, became Francis Mary Paul at his Baptism, there took place much more than a change of names. He was keenly aware of a profound change in himself, and it was soon evident to others that he had buried the old natural sinful man and risen as a child, as a son of God. And yet, as Jesus did not divest Himself of His divinity when He chose to clothe Himself with all things human, sin alone excepted, so did Libermann discard none of his natural human affections when he became a follower of Christ.

Francis remained the loving son, brother, uncle, friend, and quickly learned to Christianize every God-given human love, thereby making it more genuine, generous, extensive, unprejudiced, and profound.

He who once proclaimed that “true virtue consists in detachment from all things and from self, and in humble and peaceful surrender of ourselves into the hands of Jesus”—a virtue he constantly practiced—also believed in its counterpart, namely, a never-increasing attachment to relatives, friends and strangers, loved and embraced in and for God, in and for Jesus.

Only those who have adopted puritanical ideas of Christian, sacerdotal and religious life will be astonished when they read about Libermann’s constant visits to his relatives, his persistent interest in their affairs, his personal attention to every member of his family.

The letters to people in the world gathered in the present volume give the lie to those who say that Christianity and especially religious life dehumanize a man. True saints like Therese of Lisieux, genuine Christians like Venerable Francis Liberman clearly show that a close follower of the Son of Man lives a life that is more truly and nobly human.

These letters are perfectly human; they are human love letters. But they are, at the same time, love letters addressed to God, to Jesus, to the Mother of God.
PREFACE

By that very fact these letters can give spiritual joy, comfort and inspiration to every reader be he lay or religious.

It may be useful for the better understanding of the letters to append a few biographical data concerning their author.

Jacob was born to Lazarus Libermann, Rabbi of Saverne, Alsace, on April 12, 1802.

From his earliest days Jacob was marked with the cross of suffering; there were infirmities due to his delicate constitution; companions pursued him with their railleries; and when he was nine years old he suffered the loss of his mother who had given him most loving support.

Destined to become a rabbi, the clever boy proficiently studied the Talmud but after a while became rationalistic in his views. A casual contact with the New Testament opened his eyes to the lovableness of the Son of Mary but he refused to accept miracles. The conversion of his older brother Doctor Samson Libermann greatly embittered him, but eventually he took a more peaceful view of Christianity. Grace was powerfully at work in him.

He went to Paris, met and was guided by the Jewish convert, Dr. Paul Drach, and at the Stanislas College, following a fervent prayer, was suddenly illumined with the light of faith, like Saul on the way to Damascus.

He was baptized on December 24, 1826, and immediately desired to become a priestly savior of souls. He studied in turn at Stanislas, Saint Sulpice and Issy. But the road to the priesthood became firmly closed to him by the dreadful disease of epilepsy. In the meantime, however, he exercised a powerful influence both inside and outside the walls of the seminary, being sought as a spiritual guide. In 1837 he, a simple seminarian, still barred from major orders, was chosen Master of novices of the Eudist Society.

Three years later, under the impulse of God’s grace, he abandoned the security of the Eudist’ Novitiate and under-
took the founding of the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary. Against incredible odds, he reached the priesthood on September 21, 1841.

In 1848 Father Libermann’s congregation merged with that of the Holy Ghost and he became its eleventh Superior General. He died in Paris on February 2, 1852.

His cause of beatification was introduced in 1876, and the Sacred Congregation of Rites approved his writings on May 15, 1886. In 1891 the same Congregation approved the Process relative to “the reputation of holiness” of the Venerable Francis Libermann. On June 19, 1910, the Holy See issued the decree declaring that he had practiced the Christian virtues in an heroic fashion.

Universally recognized as one of the “greatest spiritual directors,” Father Libermann’s letters continue to be eagerly read by the numerous souls, both in the cloister and in the world, who are desirous of leading a life in which God is the center, the Alpha and the Omega of all their deeds.

It is our hope that this second volume of his letters in English translation will meet the same enthusiastic reception as the first.1

A few of the letters chosen for this volume contain very little direct spiritual advice. They have been included to show how the Venerable Francis, with his intense spiritual life, did not lose sight of lesser concerns but raised them all to the level of God.

Duquesne University
Pittsburgh, Pa.


I. LETTERS TO DOCTOR AND MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

Venerable Francis Libermann practiced and preached great detachment from creatures, but he also knew how to love them in God. He thus preserved always a strong spiritual attachment to his eldest brother, Samson, and his sister-in-law.

The forty-five letters of Father Libermann to his brother and sister-in-law which have been selected for this volume cover the period 1828-1847, i.e., from his entrance in Saint Sulpice Seminary to shortly before the merger of his congregation with that of the Holy Ghost. The first was written in German, evidently to please Mrs. Samson Libermann, who hailed from Hessen, Germany, and was not yet too familiar with French.

Samson Libermann was born in Saverne, Alsace, on October 9, 1790. He disappointed his father Rabbi Lazarus Libermann by abandoning his rabbinical courses, studying medicine instead. A greater sorrow still came to Rabbi Libermann when Samson and his wife, Isabelle Meylert, became Catholics in 1824. After being mayor of Illkirch, Dr. Libermann went to live in Strasbourg from 1840 on. He was never a success in worldly affairs, but nobly raised a family of seven children to the honor of God. After the death of his wife in 1856, he retired to Langonnet, a house of the Holy Ghost Fathers in France. He died there in 1860.

It may be useful to recall what he wrote about his brother Francis:

I am not able to give many details about my brother's childhood for I left home at a very early age and returned only twice a year and then only for a short time.

1Exclusive of the letter quoted here in the introduction, which dates from before his conversion.
I only remember that he [Francis] had a frail constitution, that he showed extraordinary gentleness and mildness. This made him the butt and the scapegoat of his brothers; nevertheless they had a very deep affection for him. He was always remarkable for his humility and in this he was so sincere that he regarded himself as the least of men.

For myself in particular, the oldest of the family, he had boundless respect and put absolute confidence in me. In spite of my unworthiness, the Lord gave me the grace of calling me first to His Church from among the members of my family, and I feel certain that God made use of my influence and authority over my brother to call him also to Himself.

My conversion and that of my wife, which took place in 1824, made a deep impression on Francis. He suffered intensely from it and made bitter reproaches to me for what he called my apostasy. It seems, however, that my answers made an impression on him. He passed from one extreme to the other: first a superstitious Talmudist, then freethinker, and finally going so far as to deny Revelation. I transcribe literally the letter which Francis sent me from Metz, and which was dated, January 6, 1826.

Dear Brother:

Your letter of Nov. 24 aroused my righteous astonishment. You seem to doubt whether my friendship for you will continue after your change of religion. Well, even if I were the most ardent zealot of the synagogue, I would find it impossible to sever my sincere attachment for my brothers, for this was instilled in me from my earliest years and has always been my delight and happiness.

It would be absolutely useless for me to read Bossuet, and if you had known my true sentiments you would not have recommended him to me. Here is what I think about religion:

God gave us the power to think not for the sake of letting it lie dormant but that we might exercise it. If a man had to allow his mind to grow dull, if he had to sur-
render blindly to the chains of religion, how then would he differ from the brute? Religion would make him what a brute is by force of nature. Why did I receive that heavenly gift if not that I might make use of it?

In accordance with those considerations, I have formed my own religion based on my own reason, and I don’t think that I would commit a crime even if I erred in some of my maxims, provided I don’t harm my neighbor. However, since I don’t know the principles of philosophy and so am liable easily to go astray, I believe that I should open my mind to a man who is enlightened and who can correct my errors. You are my oldest and well-beloved brother . . . I shall therefore explain my way of thinking to you and ask you to be a little indulgent.

We must regard the Bible as a foundation of all the religions that are predominant in Europe. . . . Now, a structure that has poor foundations crumbles of its own accord. Looking closely at the Bible, we see that it is false and the Bible itself proves this. How foolish to believe all the fables that it contains! How can we believe that God showed his favors for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by so many wonders? . . . Why didn’t God have a like interest in so many philosophers of antiquity? . . . Suppose that the patriarchs really did practice the highest virtues, isn’t it extravagant to accept that God rewards the virtues of the father by favoring his descendants that are filled with vices?

The same applies to the punishment of Adam. . . . Must I be so unjust as to believe that God avenged the crime of Adam in the latter’s descendants? . . . Is not this blasphemy, does not God Himself give the command “Do not punish the children for the crime of their father”? . . .

Would it not be unjust on the part of God to choose a single people on earth to enlighten and reveal the true principles of religion? . . . And then, if all those wonders recorded in the Bible aren’t fables, how can we understand the repeated rebellions of the Jews? . . . How was it possible for them to have so little trust in God? . . .

I conclude from all this that all God demands of us is to acknowledge Him, to be just and human. . . . So it makes
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

no difference whether I am a Jew or a Christian, provided I adore God, and whether He is one Person or in Three. . . . This is also why I excuse you for changing your religion . . .

I began studying Latin fifteen months ago. . . . In Greek I have reached the verbs. . . . I am not losing courage . . . although I am to walk alone, I shall be guided by my own application, and hope to reach the goal. . . . I have neglected Hebrew. . . . I am afraid that my father will recall me from Metz. . . . When I see that I have made enough progress in Latin and Greek, I shall begin anew the studies of Oriental languages.

With all good wishes,

Your brother,

JACOB LIBERMAN

P.S. Please, give my best regards to Mrs. Libermann, my dear sister-in-law. If I had room, I would not fail to write to her also. Her letter filled me with joy.2

---


1


Dear Friends:

I should have written you a long time ago, and I come now to pay my debt in a poor way, for I have very little to tell you. I hope you will pardon me this time. I have to prepare for a long examination before our vacation which will begin in the middle of August.

---

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.
It would have been a great pleasure for me to spend the holidays with you. I could have taught catechism to our little lady [i.e., your daughter] who perhaps needs such instruction, and I would have been able to talk with you during that time; there is so much I have to tell you, but I have no money and I don't want to be a burden to you for two months. So this will have to be put off for another time.

I was very glad to receive the bedsheets and the shirts which Barbara sent me; the bedlinen is particularly nice.

Alphonse [our brother] has not yet found time to come and see me. A short time ago I received a visit from [your daughter] Pauline. She has profited much by the time she spent in the convent of the Sacred Heart, speaks French fairly well and has especially benefited in the matter of piety. God truly gave her a special grace in making her come to Paris.

As for myself I am always contented, always happy. My heart is always in perfect tranquillity and nothing is able to disturb that peace. I have no other desire than that of serving my God as well as I can and I hope that His infinite goodness will not refuse me His graces. He will lead me, I trust, to the end of the painful career [that life is] in such a way that I shall never offend Him.

My health is good; I think that my nervous ailment is on the wane. I have had no violent attacks [of epilepsy] since the month of February of last year. I rise at five in the morning and make my meditation, an exercise which is most apt to excite my nerves, and yet I feel nothing at all. This is no doubt another grace given me by God and one that I do not deserve.

With all good wishes,

Your brother,

Francis Libermann
P.S. Please give my humble regards to Father Libermann [the Vicar General of Strasbour]. I thank him very much for his kindness in sending me books. By the way, I have been told that you showed him my latest letter. I don’t like this at all. I beg you not to do that sort of thing any more. I have my reasons for asking it.

Say hello for me to the children.

2

His willingness to be the godfather of his niece. Thoughts on Christian education. He is happy despite his ill health.

Letter Two Issy, April 8, 1829 Vol. 1, p. 150

Dear Friends:

You are giving me inexpressible joy by selecting me to be sponsor for my newly-born niece! I am charmed to have a little daughter in Jesus Christ. May He keep her in good health, overwhelm her with His favors, and strengthen her with His graces, so that she may become good, pious, and lovable before God and men!

Her dear and devout mother is perfectly right not to ask of me any other candy than prayers; I would find it impossible to give her the sweets of this world, for the simple reason that I don’t have any and I probably will never have such things, for I don’t care about them.

I shall, however, do my best to get her sweets that are far preferable, things heavenly and divine, whose sweetness and flavor will last forever.

Yes, certainly, if God looks kindly upon my prayers, my dear little spiritual daughter, as well as all of you, will be perfect Christians; and you will love the Lord with all your
heart and all your strength. For I can wish no greater happiness to those who are as dear to me as you are; and when you have once tasted this happiness, you will have no more doubts about the truth of my words.

[Thoughts on Christian Education]

Will you kindly permit me to say a few words now about the education, not only of my little godchild, in whom I am as much interested as you yourselves are, but also of your other children, who are just as dear to me. I would ask you to give more attention to their religious education than is usually the case.

Give them an education that is truly Christian; make them study their Catechism well, and train them in solid piety. The religious part of education is usually neglected in families that live in the country. And yet it is especially in this matter that parents owe their children the greatest care. There is a tendency to procure temporal advantages for them which are unreal and vanish like smoke, and to neglect the true and stable treasures which must accompany them one day into eternity, and decide their everlasting happiness or misfortune.

Do not, I beg you, act this way with your beloved children; foster in them true Christian piety. You will see how sweet and beautiful it is when you have given it a trial. Your children will not be the only ones to profit by it; you too will gain by it, for what child will show more love and obedience to his parents than the one who is pious and truly Christian? A child cannot love Jesus Christ without tenderly loving his parents. He cannot please Jesus Christ without showing perfect submission to his parents; he knows that God demands this, and he will strive to fulfill His loving Will faithfully.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN 

If you raise your children in a Christian manner, the blessing of the Lord will rest upon you. He will overwhelm you with His graces and favors, and will infallibly lead you to life everlasting.

I trust you will pardon me for speaking in this way; you know how dear you are to me, and it is the friendship which I feel for you and your dear children that makes me say all this in order to procure for you all, the treasures of the life to come.

May I ask you to give my most respectful regards to Mrs. Halle. I recommended little Marie Antoinette to Saint Joseph, and I should like to get Mrs. Halle’s permission to give to the child the name of Josephine, as a sign that she is under the special protection of that Saint. Also tell Mr. Poirson that I am very grateful to him for taking my place [at the baptism]. I don’t have the honor of knowing that gentleman, but from all that I have heard about him, I have reason to regret that I was not able to fulfill that function myself; for I should have had the advantage of becoming acquainted with him.

[Happiness Despite of His Illness]

My health is not yet completely restored, but it is better; my nerves gave me no trouble for eighteen months, but they made me suffer a great deal towards the end of last year and during the past winter. I think that brainwork has tired me. I was busy all day studying theology; and now, as soon as I attempt to work a little, I feel a tightening of the head, as if my forehead and temples were encircled with an iron band. All this will oblige me to take it easy for a number of years until my health is completely restored. I have resolved to withdraw for a while from the seminary; I don’t know yet where I shall go, but I do not worry about that. Father
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMAN

Augé, the superior of [Stanislas] college, has offered to give me a position in his house without having to study there; it is possible that I shall accept. I may, however, tell you that I am always satisfied, and I can assure you that I never was as happy as I am now. How true it is therefore that the more we love God, and the more we seek to serve Him well, the better we fulfill the end for which He created us. But if I were to tell you all I have in my heart, I should never finish this letter.

Felix and Samuel [our brothers] will be mad at me because I did not leave room for them [in this letter]; but I was so busy dirtying this paper with my scribble that I was unable to stop!

Best regards to you as well as to my good and pretty little godchild, and all your dear children.

Your brother,

FRANCIS LIBERMAN

3

He sees no reason to oppose Felix’ marriage to a penniless but pious girl.

Letter Three  Issy, near Paris,  Vol. 1, p. 152
September, 1829

Dear Brother and Sister:

I have waited long for an opportunity to speak to you about the marriage which [our brother] Felix is about to contract, but, having no chance, I am obliged to contact you by mail. I noticed from your letter to Felix that you are not satisfied with the marriage, and I am afraid that you are going to hinder it by not sending him his papers. But, my
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

dear friends, you would be wrong, for in my opinion this is a very suitable match, and, very likely, he could not have found better. It is true that the young lady is not rich—granted even that she has nothing—but do you count as nothing her virtue, which is infinitely above everything that we consider most precious?

And if Felix had contracted marriage with a young lady rich in gold and silver but poor in virtue who would have made him unhappy for his whole life, would you have been better satisfied? Again this is a mere supposition, for a rich girl never marries a poor workingman; besides, Felix needs somebody to sustain him in his religion which he has practiced well until now, and no one could do it better than a virtuous woman. On the contrary, a woman who cares little for her duties and who seeks nothing but her vanities and pleasures, could have led him only to his eternal loss. And certainly it is far better to have no money than to run so great and imminent a risk of damnation.

But, you will say, what need has he to get married? He could have waited until he found a suitable person who has some money. No, I do not think so; I believe that you are wrong in this, for Felix is of an age and is in a city in which he runs the greatest risk of being spoiled. The boredom of bachelorhood would itself be capable of corrupting the most virtuous young man, especially if he is surrounded, as Felix is, by people who have no morals.

Besides, I don’t see any great need of money; I don’t even know what he would do with it. He does a lot of work and gives jobs to three men and two boys, so it seems to me that he has enough income to support a wife. Moreover, we must leave something to divine Providence, who looks after all our needs if we have confidence in Him.

I believe that he would not even know what to do with money; the only use he could make of it would be to buy
a little bookstore and for that he never would have enough. So, I beg you, my dear friends, stop valuing money so highly; instead of giving happiness, it can only bring unhappiness to those who seek it. You yourselves would feel the truth of what I say, if you sought it as much as you want Felix to do.

Write to him, therefore, as soon as you can, and show him that you are satisfied with his marriage. He is very much grieved to see you discontented. Alphonse [our brother] told me that he had written to you on this subject; I hope that you did not let yourselves be influenced by him. I don’t doubt that he has sought Felix’s best interests, but he has looked at things somewhat in the wrong light. Besides, Alphonse’s ideas are not those of a Christian. But I don’t love him less for it; on the contrary, this shows me the sincere attachment he has for us. I shall try to convert him if it pleases God to touch his heart. Pray for him and for me also.

The physician of the seminary is of the same opinion as my brother, and I will remain this year also to see how things will go. I am at present on vacation in the country house of the seminary, a short league from Paris.

Your brother and friend,

Francis Libermann

Say hello for me to the children, and especially to my little goddaughter. I am told that they are all very well.
Libermann speaks of his beloved illness. No material benefits to be expected from a priest. Exhortation to be detached from worldly goods. Trust in God regarding conversion of his relatives.

Letter Four  
Issy, July 8, 1830  
Vol. 1, p. 152

Dear Brother and Sister:

I am delighted to hear that my dear sister [in-law] has given birth to a fine boy [Francis Xavier]. So God has at last sent this long expected son! May He keep him in good health, and make him grow in wisdom and virtue, so that one day he may be the consolation of your old age! I see by your letter that both mother and son are doing well. Thank God for this! I shall be pleased if our dear sister will send me a few words as soon as she can write.

[My Illness is a Great Blessing for Me]

But I must begin by speaking to you about myself. I feel that I'm very guilty for not having given you any news for so long a time. The whole cause of my negligence is that, foreseeing how little I could say that would be pleasant, I decided to remain silent. My health is constantly improving; my nerves are much calmer than they were two years ago. I have not, however, been promoted to the subdiaconate because my sickness has not completely left me; and very likely I shall be troubled with it for quite a long time yet. Consequently, it will be some years before I can be promoted, and perhaps I never will be.

This is very afflicting, annoying, and even unbearable. Such would certainly be the language of a child of the world.
who seeks his happiness in the goods of this world alone, and
who acts as though there were no God for him. But this is
not the way that the children of God, true Christians, act; they are satisfied with everything that their heavenly Father
gives them, because they know that whatever He sends is
good and useful for them, and that it would be a real mis-
fortune for them if it were otherwise.

All the evils with which God seems to afflict us are real
benefits, and woe to the Christian whose every wish is ful-
filled; he is not overwhelmed with the favors of his God. But I can assure you, my dear friends, that my beloved sick-
ness is for me a great treasure, preferable to all the goods
that the world offers to its votaries, because these pretended
goods are but filth and wretchedness in the eyes of a true
child of God; and they serve only to draw him further away
from his Father, who is in heaven.

For myself, I hope that, if our Lord Jesus Christ continues
to bestow upon me the graces which He has given me until
this moment, however undeserving I have been of them, I
shall lead a life of perfect poverty and entirely devoted to
His service. I shall then be richer than if I possessed the
whole world, and I defy the world to find a happier man;
for, who is richer than he who wishes nothing? Who is happier than he whose every desire is fulfilled?

And why should you be sorry on my account? Are you
afraid that I shall die of hunger? Well, the Lord feeds the
birds of the fields, and will He not find means to feed me
also? He loves me more than He does the birds of the fields.

[A Priest's Relatives Should Not Expect Material Benefits]

But, you will say, if I were a priest, I might obtain a posi-
tion and help my family. No, my dear friends, that shall
never be. My soul, my body, my being, and my whole exist-
ence belong to God; and if I knew that there were still the
smallest fiber in me that did not belong to Him, I would tear it out and trample it under by feet in the dust and the mire. Whether I am a priest or not, whether I am a millionaire or a beggar, whatever I am and whatever I have, belongs to God, and belongs to no one else but Him. I beseech you not to ask me to act otherwise, for this would be unjust on your part as well as useless. The bonds of charity which tie me to my Lord Jesus are too strong for you to break, even supposing that you should wish to do so—which I do not think—provided always that it pleases my Lord to continue to bestow upon me the favors of which I am so undeserving.

[Detachment from Wordly Goods]

As for you, my dear friends, I must acknowledge that I often pity you on seeing how taken up you are with the vanities of this wretched world. The dangers you incur are so great, that I would tremble for your salvation, if I didn’t know the goodness of our God.

I am sure that He lavishes His graces on you, and it depends only on you to be His dear friends by being faithful to what He asks of you, and by not becoming attached to these miserable riches of the earth. You certainly are obliged to save and acquire some wealth, so that you may be able to bring up your dear little family honorably; this is something absolutely necessary, but you can detach your heart and your affections, from those things for they must belong to God alone.

I cannot but feel that this is an indiscretion on my part, that it does not belong to me to give you advice. I would be glad if I had not written this down; but it would be too difficult to begin my letter all over again and, moreover, I don’t have the time for it; this is why I must be content to ask your pardon for it.
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

I forgot to tell you that I shall remain at the seminary as long as the Superior will keep me. I did not ask him, nor will I ask him, why he does not send me away; perhaps he hopes to have me ordained in a year or two. Still, I rather think that he keeps me out of charity, for he knows that I have nothing and he pities me. At all events, it is in the plan of Providence that I still remain and it is my duty to conform thereto.

I think this is all I have to tell you at present. Adieu!

Yours in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMAN

[Trust in God Regarding Conversion of Relatives]

P.S. I was on the point of forgetting to speak to you about our relatives. It seems to me that their obduracy in infidelity has saddened you very much. I, too, am grieved; but what can we do? Let us try to console ourselves, and place our trust in the mercy of God. If He does not see fit to bestow upon them the great grace which He has given us, let us adore His divine justice and offer up to Him the sacrifice of the persons who are dearest to us. Let us say to Him, “Our Father, who art in heaven, . . . Thy holy will be done.” Let us, therefore, continue to pray and hope; for we have every reason to expect all from Him.

If our sister should marry at the present time, we ought not to grieve to much over it, although at first sight this would appear to take her further away from the faith; for we do not know the adorable secrets of divine Providence. Perhaps this marriage is but the means which the mercy of
God employs in order to bring her to the light of divine faith. Perhaps if she had not married this one she would have married somebody far worse.

How is little Marie-Antoinette and how is the “little peasant-girl”?¹ She is no longer “little Pauline” but a big Miss. I hope she will take care of the small children and especially her little brother. I would like her to write me soon a long letter in French.

I addressed this letter to Illkirch, for I expect to send it at the first opportunity, but I haven’t had a chance until now, so I am sending it by regular mail, lest you become anxious about me.

Try to preserve peace in the family. My future is in God’s hands.


Dear Brother and Sister:

We always seem to have reasons for complaining about one another; it is either I who am late writing a letter or it is you, or again we are both guilty. I think we should put an end to all those disputes and settle the exact time when we shall write; and if anything occurs that needs to be said, we can always anticipate the date of such a letter.

It seems to me that, this time, I have a right to complain, but I also believe that this will not always be the case. Some other time I shall take my turn in being lazy, and you will then be justified in being displeased with me.

¹An Alsatian patois expression.
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

[Try to Preserve Peace in the Family]

I am writing now to reconcile you with [our brother] David, for, according to his letter, there is some trouble between you. To tell the truth, I cannot figure out what the reason might be. It would seem that you only become reconciled to fall out once more! I beg you, give him satisfaction. The poor man has spent all his money, and on top of that he must still suffer from the displeasure of people! Do me the favor of writing to him and keeping peace with him. He has such a good heart and is deeply afflicted when he is at odds with his brothers.

I know very well that money is at the root of all those troubles and misunderstandings, that miserable money which is the cause of all this world’s difficulties. David claims you owe him money and that you laugh at him. Why not try to reach an agreement and to pay less attention to money? I assure you I sometimes almost wish that you were all poor; then you would not have to quarrel about questions of money.

David is especially angry with Samuel who, apparently, wrote him an insulting letter, so much so that Esther¹ did not show it to him and did not allow him to read it. . . . He complains particularly because you allowed Samuel to write in that way. In fact, I don’t see why Samuel wants to insult David, for he does not deserve it. He tells me he willingly pardons Samuel, who may have done this thing through lightheadedness, but what surprises me is that Samson who is levelheaded permitted Samuel to do such a thing. This is the grievance for which you should beg his pardon.

I think you did not read Samuel’s letter. I don’t want to bother you any more about all those stories. I simply urge you to appease and soothe David so that from now on all of you will always preserve peace among yourselves.

¹Samuel and Esther were a brother and a sister of David, Samson and Francis Libermann.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

[My Future is in God's Hands]

As for myself I am always about the same. I am still at the seminary and will remain here until the Superiors judge it proper to dismiss me, for if I cannot be advanced to the priesthood, they will not be able to keep me forever.

In this regard I beg you once more not to grieve or worry in any way about me. My Father who is in heaven will know what to do with me. My body, my soul, my whole being belong to Him and they depend entirely upon Him. This is all I can tell you about that.

It seems to me that I recently quoted for you the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, who said that His Father feeds the birds of the fields. Have we not much more reason to believe that He will not neglect His servants who are of much more value than birds? I know you are good Christians and that you understand such language very well.

Adieu, dear brother and sister. I am entirely yours in Jesus and Mary, whom I love with all my soul and whom I urge you to love just as much and even much more.

Your brother,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, acolyte
He encourages them to meditate. The cholera in Paris has led to many conversions. The clergy's care of the plague-stricken. Spiritual devotions. Family news.

Dear Brother and Sister:

I have delayed somewhat in answering you because I have been sick with a slight inflammation of the lungs which kept me in bed for eight or ten days. An abundant and uninterrupted perspiration, sent by God, has cured me.

[Practice Meditation]

Your letters edified and consoled me. I rejoice before God because I see you all so well disposed to serve Him in spirit and in truth. I beg my very dear brother in particular to correspond with the great graces which God deigns to bestow upon him. I am delighted to see you so filled with the desire of Christian perfection. This alone will suffice to sanctify you with your whole family, if you know how to profit by it.

I want to indicate to you an infallible means of putting this great grace to good use: it is the practice of mental prayer. Through it, God will enlighten you and show you how to practice virtue and evangelical perfection as they should be practiced; and in mental prayer He will give you at the same time the strength to practice them.

You could devote half an hour every day to this holy exercise. It would be best to choose the first half hour after rising, unless some other business calls you elsewhere.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERmann

Bishop le Lamotte of Amiens, who in his day was well known for his holiness and wisdom, said: "I answer for the salvation of a priest who devotes half an hour a day to mental prayer, and, therefore, with stronger reason, for the salvation of a layman.” Saint Vincent de Paul advised all those whom he directed, even servants, to practice mental prayer.

For this purpose, I am sending you a method of prayer which we have to learn by heart; it is excellent and is recommended by the most skillful spiritual directors. I am sending also some leaflets entitled “The Interior Life.” They may prove of great help to you if you wish to attain Christian perfection.

[The Cholera Has Led to Many Conversions]

The cholera has (indirectly) done an immense amount of good in Paris; it has been the occasion of many conversions, the most remarkable of which is that of Casimir Périer. I must tell you the story of this admirable stroke of God’s grace.

You know that, as a consequence of the cholera, Périer had brain fever and completely lost his mind. His wife, who is very devout and has the reputation of being a very saintly woman, was inconsolable, especially when she reflected on the wretched state of her husband’s soul and the moral impossibility of his conversion. She prayed unceasingly and had prayers said for him in all the religious communities of Paris. God heard all these fervent supplications. Three days before his death, Périer recovered his reason and the first words he said to his son, at his bedside, were: “My son, go quickly and get the Bishop of Meaux.” His son replied that the Bishop of Meaux was not in Paris. (Let me explain that the Most Reverend Gallard, Bishop of Meaux, was formerly Mr. Périer’s pastor and that he is still his wife’s spiritual direc-
tor.) "Well," replied Périer," take a carriage and bring him at once." His son did not have to be told twice and left at once.

The Bishop of Meaux arrived and Mr. Périer began to ask for his blessing. He confessed three times on the same day. He said to the Bishop that he hoped to be forgiven because during his ministry he had always avoided persecuting religion.

It is also remarkable that throughout his mental aberration, he kept repeating that France could not be governed without religion. The Archbishop of Paris, an intimate friend of the Bishop of Meaux, has given his assurance that Périer’s conversion was genuine, sincere and solid. I got these details from a reliable authority well acquainted with all the facts.

[The Clergy’s Care for the Victims of the Epidemic]

Let me add a word about the Archbishop and the seminary. You know that His Grace offered the seminary to the government to be used as a hospital, and that the superior offered the services of the seminarians. Both offers were accepted. His Grace did more. He begged the minister to use the salary still due to him for the relief of the plague-stricken poor.

But this is not all. There is a country-house at Conflans that belongs to him. This house was completely wrecked by the populace out of malice toward His Grace, during the riots of last February, I believe. When order was restored, His Grace had it repaired and when the cholera epidemic broke out at Conflans, he turned the house over to the care of poor cholera patients, maintaining it at his own expense, since the village was unable to provide for them. It was noticed that the four first who died there had been most conspicuous in the destruction of that house during the disturbance. This made such an impression on the inhabitants that one poor
man stricken by the plague cried out: “My God, why do you strike me? I did not do any damage to the Archbishop’s house.”

His Grace also established societies of devout persons whose duty it was to visit the sick in the hospitals, to give them assistance and to perform the most menial services for them... He himself visited all the hospitals bringing consolation to the sick. One day visiting the seminary, now used as a hospital, he entered a patient’s room but withdrew because the sick man was asleep. The latter finding out afterwards that His Grace had come to see him expressed his astonishment. The Archbishop, having been informed, went back to the room to console the patient. The latter sighed and said: “Your Grace, you are so kind, and let me tell you that I have cursed you so often!” The Archbishop replied with his habitual charity: “Don’t worry. You say you have cursed me; I will now give you my blessing.” This he did and kissed the cholera patient on the forehead. You can easily imagine what an impression this made on the poor sick man...

Now a word about our seminarians. The superior notified them of the offer he had made to the minister and told them that those who would like to nurse the sick were asked to give their names. These would remain in the seminary in Paris, while the majority of the members was to go to the country-house and pursue their studies. Those who wished to return to their homes were allowed to do so. Practically all the seminarians volunteered to nurse the sick...

The superior then chose thirty and sent the others to the country-house. The latter resigned themselves to the holy will of God and obeyed with the same peace of mind as if they had received everything they had asked for. Those who remained were filled with joy and took care of the sick with a solicitude and zeal that gave evidence of their great charity.
I believe that only forty-two died out of all the sick who were taken care of at the seminary, and many of these simply because their condition was already hopeless on arrival. It was astonishing to see the courage with which those seminarians, who had never dealt with patients or come in contact with the dying, treated the poor sufferers, washed them, gave them their medicines and held the dying in their arms. A fervent seminarian, one of my friends, told me that he trembled only once when one poor man was dying in his arms; the reason was that he thought that this patient was badly disposed and had not received the last sacraments. Fortunately this was not so; the good man had made his confession.

The kindness of our seminarians was truly extraordinary and they converted many, no matter how badly disposed at the time when they were brought to the seminary. Several of these poor people who are now convalescing, receive Holy Communion every week and some even twice a week. A goodly number of those who have already left, come back to confession to the priests of the seminary. Five members of the faculty remained to supervise the charitable work of the seminarians and to administer to the sick.

It is equally noteworthy that no seminarian, whether of those who nursed the sick, or went to the country-house, has had cholera yet, although almost all the means suggested by human prudence for its prevention were neglected. The Blessed Virgin, who is our great patroness and the very dear Mother of the seminarians of St. Sulpice, evidently protected us, and will protect us, I hope, to the end. The generosity of the seminarians of Paris has not only increased the fervor in this seminary, but in all the seminaries of France. There is a disposition to follow this example everywhere.

[Spiritual Devotions]

I concur most heartily with you in the novena you propose. We could begin it on Ascension Day. If you like we shall
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

make it in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. You may say the beads every day in honor of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin and add the following invocations at the end of each decade: “Heart of Jesus, safety of those who hope in Thee, have mercy on us; Immaculate Heart of Mary, conceived without the stain of sin, pray for us.”

It would be preferable if the whole family recited these prayers together but if this is not possible, recite a part in the morning [during morning prayers] and the rest at whatever time you are free to do so. It would also be well for you to assist at Holy Mass daily, if there is any possibility. As your business may not allow it, we shall be satisfied with the beads for the novena, and Holy Mass will be a matter of devotion.

I will offer Holy Communion for that intention every time I have the happiness of receiving. You may do the same. In fact, you would do well to receive oftener than usual. If you wish, we can add at the end of each decade of the rosary; “St. Vincent de Paul, pray for us.”

[Family News]

I was very much gratified to receive a few words from my sister [-in-law] Babette. I had been so long since I heard from her. But you, my dear sister, you ask me to come and see you! I would willingly do so if it were at all possible. We must not, however, despair of anything; if it is God’s will, He will arrange matters so that we shall meet.

I was especially charmed with [your daughter] Pauline’s little letter—she speaks French like a book—and, to all appearances, that is not the extent of her accomplishments, for she can play the piano too. I am sending her a pretty little book, and when I come to see you, I shall bring her a still nicer one. I ask her to be very good, to love the Blessed Virgin very much, and to pray to her very often. She should
teach her little sister to pray also, and to love the Blessed Virgin. I am sure that she is very obedient to her papa and her mamma. I ask her to kiss her little sisters for me, her little brother, and especially little Marie-Antoinette, to whom I shall soon send a little rosary.

I will send you at the same time some books and several engravings by express, among others, a beautiful engraving of the Blessed Virgin, to be framed; two of His Grace, the Archbishop; and a dozen medals. I will explain all this when I send them to you. I should have addressed them to you before this, but Felix has not yet finished binding two books which I gave him long ago. Both he and his wife continue in good health.

In the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and in their holy charity,

Your brother and friend,

Francis Libermann

Tell Samuel that I send him my best regards. Let him see this letter. I shall write to him when I forward the objects I mentioned. It might be hard on my chest, which is not yet very strong, if I wrote too much at one time.
Christian acceptance of disappointments. God wants us to deny ourselves.

Letter Seven    Issy, September 10, 1833    Vol. 1, p. 162

Dear Brother and Sister:

[Christian Acceptance of Disappointments]

I should have written to you long ago, but, since I have had no good news to tell you, I have constantly delayed. I was led to hope that I would have the consolation of seeing you this year; but it appears that God wishes to put off this journey for some time yet. Unforeseen circumstances prevent me from carrying out those very pleasant plans we made for my vacation. This news will no doubt cause you pain, but I trust you will easily console yourselves with the thought that it is not God's will for me to come at this time.

We should be guilty of disobedience towards our good Father, if we wished to be together when He wants us to remain separated. Let us obey without questioning the orders of our Father, and we shall not lose the fruits of our submission. You know that He renders a hundredfold even in this world; and, besides this reward, He promises eternal life to those who give up their hearts' desires for His sake.

You cannot imagine, my very dear friends, how I rejoice from the bottom of my soul because I am not able to come to see you this year. This will teach you how to deny yourselves and not to yield to every craving of your hearts!

[We Must Practice Self-Denial]

Perhaps until now you have thought it sufficient that a good Christian deny himself all forbidden pleasures, and that he
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

could enjoy as many of the innocent ones as he wished. This is true up to a certain point. But it is also true that a perfect Christian gives up even legitimate pleasures, especially if he sees that God's will is apparently opposed to them. It is not necessary that a prophet should announce to him the most holy will of our beloved Father if the Christian wishes to know it; the most insignificant event that divine Providence seems to bring about naturally suffices for him to reject all the desires of his soul, and he rejects them with perfect joy and without delay. Let us do as much, my dearest friends, let us give up our wish to see each other, since the Providence of God does not want it.

I beg of our Divine Savior Jesus Christ to give you the grace to deny yourselves, not only in this small matter, but in everything and everywhere, so that God alone may live and reign in your hearts. Let no alien affection enter into them; you will then be happy, even in this poor world. There is no need of saying more about this; I am sure you realize that what I say is true. Try to put it into practice. It is not as difficult as you may imagine. The graces we receive by way of self-denial are immense. They give us a great facility to perform the most difficult tasks: they place us above all creatures; they make us masters of our own hearts; and they give us a freedom of mind so great and a peace so perfect that nothing is capable of worrying us.

A man who seeks to deny himself in everything and to give himself entirely to God is the master of heaven, of earth and of hell. God gives him all that he desires; he is cherished by the Blessed Virgin, the angels and the saints. All the creatures of earth may unite against him; he does not fear them and they can never make him change his conduct, as was illustrated in St. Basil and others. The demons tremble before him because they recognize in him the sovereign power of God Himself.
I must close, as you see, for lack of space. In the charity of Jesus and Mary,

Your Brother and Friend,

Francis Libermann

P. S. I feel well at present, and it is not because of ill health that I have not visited you. I say this because you might have thought that the unforeseen circumstance of which I spoke was illness. This is not so. I should very much like to have a letter from [my sister] Esther and from Mr. Libmann [her husband]. It surprises me greatly that they have left me for so long a time without any news.

How to bear disappointments. Avoid worrying and abandon yourselves to God.

Letter Eight Issy, August 24, 1834 Vol. 1, p. 163

Dear Brother and Sister:

[How to Bear Disappointments]

I am taking advantage of Father Pinault’s departure to write you a few words. He is professor of Physics and Mathematics at the seminary and one of the “directors” [as the Sulpicians call them] of the house. He belongs to a society of learned men and is going to Strasbourg to make geographical explorations in the Vosges mountains. He promised that he would hand this note to my brother.

I would have been delighted to go with him for the chance of seeing you and encouraging you to become each day more
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMAN

perfect Christians. But it was not God's will. I will take good care not to grumble and hope that, on your part, you will make the sacrifice as willingly as I do, so that our divine Lord may love us more every day, that He may be pleased to draw us more closely to Himself by His holy grace and may make us more agreeable in the sight of His Father. We must rejoice, my dearest friends, at everything He deigns to do with us, and count ourselves happy if He but condescends to think of us and permits us to love Him and serve Him with our whole soul.

If He should think it proper that we never see each other again on this earth, let us say to Him with all our heart: "Lord, may Your most holy will be done. If you only permit me to see You, my heart will always be filled with the greatest joy at all Your commands, and I submit to them with all the love of my soul."

I beg of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all my heart, that He may have the kindness to imprint deeply into your hearts those sentiments so dear, so sweet, so consoling for a child of God. I would like very much, my dear friends, if you did what I tell you, sincerely and wholeheartedly. I want you to feel how sweet it is and how happy we are when we love God in that manner.

[Avoid Worrying and Abandon Yourselves to God]

Never permit yourselves to become troubled and disturbed. Put even the notion of worry out of your minds. If an undertaking does not succeed as well as you expected, rejoice before God at everything that He is pleased to do. The things that appear most important to nature are mere trifles in the estimation of a true Christian, because nothing has any importance for him except what God wishes. Trouble and worry are for hell! The children of God ought not to know what they
are. Work in complete peace and tranquility. Do your utmost, according to the circumstances of time and place in which you find yourselves. Leave the rest to the care of God’s Providence.

If God is pleased to crown your labors with success, rejoice before Him and give Him most humble thanks. If, on the contrary, everything goes wrong bless Him likewise with your whole soul. A Christian who acts this way passes his life in peace, joy and happiness. At the end of this wretched life, a life of so little account, there will come a happiness of which I shall not undertake to speak to you for fear of not doing so worthily. I beg of you in the name of the Blessed Virgin to be faithful in loving God in everything.

It is a long time since I received news from [our brother] David. Where does he stand now regarding his conversion?

Entirely yours in the holy love of Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMAN

9

The parents’ role as Christian educators of their children. A cure obtained through the Blessed Virgin.


Dear Brother and Sister:

[Parents as Christian Educators]

I see by your letter that God has blessed you with a little boy! What a happiness it will be for you to see that good little family prosper, for I feel sure that our Divine Savior
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

will pour His blessings on your dear children if you try to educate them according to the truths which He came to announce upon earth. The eternal Father caused His only Son to be born for our salvation. You should try also to bear Him children for His greater glory, or rather, since they are already born by His grace, to bring them up for Him in a holy manner.

Pardon me if I speak to you about this once more. I find the subject so serious and important that I should wish to speak about it continually. The care that a father takes to educate his children in a Christian manner entitles him to share in the merits and in the whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth.

Why did Our Lord come into this world, if not to save, and render eternally happy those dear little souls whom He has entrusted to your care? How dear these good little friends are to His Heart! If Our Lord came into the world, if He lived and died in order to procure the salvation of these dear children, why should you not endeavor to co-operate with that divine grace which He merited, in order to correspond efficaciously to the ardent desire of His Heart?

Keep in mind that you fulfill in their regard the office of priest, missionary, and guardian angel, in order to lead them to a happy eternity. What a joy it is for a father to be able to assure the fortune of his children on earth. And what unspeakable happiness it should be for a truly Christian father and mother to secure them that fortune of fortunes, that happiness beyond all happiness!

I tell you all this, not as a matter of vain imagination or of fine words but in the firmest hope that you will spare nothing in seeking to make your children Christians—fervent Christians.

The six children that God has given to you are six talents committed to your care; it rests with you to make them
prosper and increase. They are an admirable treasure which you must return to Him in heaven, and you will be rewarded a hundredfold, even in this world, if you make it bear fruit. What a happiness for you to see yourselves in heaven in the midst of six elect! Every ray of glory that God sheds upon them, will be reflected in you, and will render you more brilliant than the sun, in the midst of a happy assembly, who will rejoice and glorify God with you, blessing Him for His great mercy toward you and your family.

Do not worry, therefore, too much, if you cannot, or fear you cannot, leave them as much earthly wealth as you might wish for this is not the purpose for which they have been created. Moreover, their heavenly Father loves them, and He will take better care of them than you ever could. You are their father and mother only temporarily, whereas He will be their Father eternally if they are willing to be His children.

Give them the good example of fervor and of a Christian life; this will be worth more to them than millions in gold and silver. You will thus sanctify them, and sanctify yourselves with them; you will prepare an immense happiness and glory in heaven both for them and for yourselves.

[A Cure Obtained Through Mary]

Regarding the medals you have asked for, my dear brother, I shall send you about eighty and they will all be blessed. I shall give them to [our brother] Felix, who will forward them to you at the first opportunity.

The miracles of which you speak are very real, at least there are a great number about which we are certain. Here is one more which has occurred on behalf of a professor of theology of the Seminary at Rheims. This Father had suffered from a severe illness which affected his stomach for over four years. He went with me to take baths in sea water three years ago, but there was not the least improvement. He
was constantly getting worse and the doctors had given up hope of curing or of even helping him, so much so that at the beginning of last winter he expected to die. One day, a director of the same seminary gave him one of those medals which he had blessed. Upon taking it the sick man was seized with a strong feeling of confidence in the Blessed Virgin, who, he felt sure, would cure him. He began a novena and, although he continued to suffer much while it was going on, his confidence did not diminish. He told one of the Fathers of our seminary in a letter that he felt toward the Most Holy Virgin like a child who shows his beloved mother where he suffers pain, hoping firmly that she would cure him. On the eighth day he felt a little better and on the ninth he was completely cured. The following day he ate everything that was offered to him in the dining hall. He fasted on Ember days; he sang high Masses, and did all this without suffering the least pain, whereas before he had been scarcely able to eat anything, and had never been capable of fasting or of singing high Masses. From that time he has followed the ordinary routine of the community without feeling the least trouble.

My health is good. I have not suffered one [epileptic] attack for a whole year. This does not mean that I am cured and I do not believe that the good Lord wants me in the priesthood. If He calls me to it, I am ready. He knows that I am ready for anything He may desire.

Adieu, my dearest friends. May God bestow His holiest blessings upon you during this year, so that you and your dear children may be most pleasing to Him. Pray sometimes for me also, and take very good care, I beg you, of our dear little Mary, so that she may love God well and may be very good.

Entirely yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ and Mary,

Francis Libermann
Gratitude toward God manifests itself in greater faithfulness. The perfect love of God. Family affairs.

Letter Ten  Issy, September 13, 1835  Vol. 1, p. 164

Dear Brother and Sister:

[To Be Grateful is To Be More Faithful]

I was touched by the trial which God sent you through the sickness of my very dear sister [in law]. But I am very glad to see the reason why He so afflicted you; He wished to prove to you that He has not abandoned you, and that He hears your prayers with pleasure. Mary, our good and tender Mother, has also manifested herself on this occasion, as she never fails to do, when her beloved children have need of her.

How great should your love now be for the Blessed Virgin! And how faithfully should you serve God with your whole heart! Don’t be content, my dear friends, with giving Him thanks merely by saying some prayers or by uttering some sterile words.

Do you know how to thank God for the benefits which you have received? It is by sacrificing the passions and the natural inclinations which are opposed to what the grace of God wishes to accomplish in us for our salvation and our sanctification, and which prevent us from loving God with all our souls. Examine, therefore, what is to be corrected, so that you may become better, or what you have to retrench from or add to your conduct, in order to become more and

34
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

more pleasing in the sight of God. You know how much He loves you already. Well then, try to correspond with His bounty and His love, so that you may continually render yourselves more worthy of His benefits and graces, both temporal and spiritual.

This change, which the liveliest gratitude will effect in you, should be unseen, but, above all, and in a more special manner, should be interior. Enter into yourselves, and rid your hearts of all the defects that you find there. Subdue all the inclinations, desires, attachments, and affections for the things of this earth.

[The Perfect Love of God]

You know what Jesus Christ asks of all Christians: “You shall love the Lord your God, with your whole heart.” This means that there should be no desire or affection in our heart, which is not for God alone, to the exclusion of all creatures. And if we are obliged to seek the things of the world and make use of them, by reason of the ties that bind us in conscience to live in the society of other men, we should love them only for God, and submit ourselves in all things to the orders of His holy Will, which manifests itself to us by the ordinary course of events that are brought about or permitted by His Providence. If we love God in this way we are always tranquil and peaceful; we are beyond the influence of men and of everything that may happen; we are masters of heaven and of earth.

Behold, my dear friends, how great we are, if we are Christians! The sublime character of the child of God is displayed in our whole conduct; we are princes of the royal Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ; and the greatness of our heritage should be manifest in all our acts and all our inclinations. Everything should be grand in us, and such will in-
deed be the case, if everything in us is directed toward God, our very dear Father and Lord.

We should love God with *our whole soul*, that is, all the powers of our soul should tend toward God alone. Our will should be fixed in God alone; we should wish but God alone, and what He wishes and nothing else. Our will should have no existence but in the will of God. Reflect carefully on this subject, and you will there find treasures of grace. And not only our will, which is the principal faculty of our soul, but also our mind, our imagination and all other faculties, should work for God alone.

This is the reason why, for some time past, I wanted you to apply yourself to mental prayer, so that you might occupy your mind more intimately with the things of God, and thus learn how to serve Him perfectly, and to live entirely according to His heart.

It is also written that we should love God *with all our strength*: that is, all our desires, our inclinations, and all the powers of our soul, should tend toward God with all the vivacity, and all the force that His great grace gives us, as well as with unwavering perseverance. Oh, my dearest friends, if you indeed observed the law of our Lord Jesus Christ, you would be true Christians, truly pleasing to God and to our Blessed Lady. And if the sickness of my kind sister and her restoration to health should become the cause of your sanctification and make you really perfect Christians—a favor I expect of the mercy of God—we might, with every right, apply to her the words of our Divine Savior, when He was told of the sickness of Lazarus: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." We might add, "and in order that the Mother of God also be glorified."

That is why my joy is great, for it is my hope that you will draw great benefit from it for the salvation and perfection of your souls.
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

[Family Affairs]

My own health remains always the same. There was an interval of fourteen or fifteen months between one [epileptic] attack and another, but at the end of this time one occurred that was very slight; perhaps the next one will delay nearly as long; but all this does not matter! Love God with all your heart and this is worth more than anything else.

Felix spoke to me about your wish to place Pauline in the Sacred Heart Convent in Paris. I looked into that and was told that it would not be very advantageous for her because of the refined kind of education one receives there. One gentleman told me that he met a young person who had been educated in that convent who found it almost impossible to adjust to the ways of the persons of her own station, so that she was only good for being a lady-in-waiting or companion for a lady of high position. Besides that, the board and tuition would cost much more than you could afford to pay. . . . Here is something, though, that might suit you, if the good Lord would assist you and I personally would prefer this to the Convent of the Sacred Heart in view of your circumstances.

There is a convent at Nancy where children are brought up in a more simple fashion than at the Sacred Heart of Paris. They nevertheless give a very good education and even wealthy families send their children there. It is conducted by the Ladies of Christian Doctrine. You should write to: Madame Pauline de Faillonnet, Superior of the Ladies of Christian Doctrine, Nancy. Ask her to get the niece of Father Mollevault, Superior of Issy, to take an interest in your child. In this way the superior of the Convent may also become interested and she might be willing to accept Pauline as a boarder. You should add that, if your child were called to the religious state, it would give you great joy and that you would be glad to consecrate
your oldest girl to the service of God. . . . Father Mollevault even suggested that it would be well for you to tell said superior of the Convent that you were formerly an unbeliever; but you might feel shy about saying such a thing, and it is not necessary. I beg you not to omit the other things I have suggested.

I am very much grieved at my inability to spend some time with you. I expected to be useful to you to some small extent for the good of your souls. I should especially like to teach you how to meditate. I am very anxious for you to do so, because I am convinced that, if you applied yourself seriously to this holy exercise for even half an hour every day, you would make rapid progress in the perfection of the Christian religion, and your salvation would be almost assured. But if it pleases God to postpone our meeting, let us patiently and lovingly wait for the time when He wishes to reunite us again in this world, before consummating our union in a holy and most happy eternity. May He be, in the meantime, the only bond of our union, of all the affections and all the desires of our souls, and we shall know even here on earth the blessedness of God’s elect. May He live and reign forever in our hearts! But may He live and reign there alone, during the whole time that we are on this world of sin and misery, as well as during all eternity, where the angels and saints, and especially the Blessed Virgin, praise Him, bless Him, love and glorify Him unceasingly!

Don’t worry about my health! God knows what He has to do; let Him act in all the fullness of His love. Don’t worry about the goods of this earth for me, because I, myself, am not anxious about them. God alone shall be my only heritage and my only love. Woe to me if I think of seeking any other thing on earth! Besides, my health is always in the same condition.
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

May God be with you and may He preserve you in His grace and peace, as well as the whole of your dear family! Entirely yours in the most holy charity of Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN

P.S. I forgot to tell you that Father Mollevault's own niece was educated in that convent, and she now often pays for the board and tuition of children who are unable to pay for themselves.

11

The Christian and the spirit of the world.

Letter Eleven February 20, 1836 Vol. 1, p. 166

Dear Brother and Sister:

[Christ Wants Us to Be Unworldly]

I was wrong in not writing to you at the beginning of the year. I thought that you would not mind my silence, because I know you were aware of my heartfelt sentiments toward you, and my great desire to see you overwhelmed with graces and blessings. Since I do not aspire to belong to this world, and since I should like to see you as far removed from it as myself, I thought that it would not be necessary on this occasion to conform to its usages, however laudable they may be in themselves.

Our Lord Jesus Christ declared that His kingdom was not of this world, and He cursed this worldly world. You understand, my dear friends, the great lesson which He wishes to convey to us in these words. It is my most ardent desire to see you apply yourselves with all your strength to establish
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

the reign of our dear Lord in your souls. They are so dear to Him, and He bestows so many graces and favors upon them!

Let it be your greatest care to cleanse your hearts of all worldly spirit, so that Our Lord may not disdain them, but erect His kingdom in them. That is why you ought to be very pure, very empty of the world and its spirit, which is an object of such horror and abomination to this Divine Master that, unwilling to reign over it, He abandons it to His enemy. How unfortunate this poor world is in being thus cast aside by our God and Lord Jesus, who is so meek, so lovable, and so delightful to those who serve Him and make Him the object of their joy and satisfaction!

Let us love our kind Jesus! But let us love Him crucified, covered with opprobrium, weighed down with sorrow and humiliation. Behold and see if He loved His servants; but see also if He acted according to the spirit of the world. Do not, therefore, love the world nor anything that is in it.

[The Spirit of the World]

The spirit of the world is a spirit of pride, of untruth, of vanity, of boasting and of malice. In a word, it is the spirit of the devil, who is the ruler of this world and who breathes his spirit into all his own servants in constant opposition to the interests and the most sweet love of Jesus. This spirit inspires the worldlings with the desire for display, for self-esteem, for self-love, a spirit that attributes everything to self, instead of directing all things to the love of God alone. It makes them seek their own interest, and not the interest of God alone, as Our Lord did and taught. He “sought not His own glory” but the glory of His heavenly Father.

The devil further inspires his slaves with the desire for satisfying themselves everywhere and in all things. He makes them seek their own pleasure, their own ease and comfort,
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANNN

at all times. Jesus on the contrary continually urges us to love and glorify His Father in all our thoughts, actions, words, and in all the circumstances of our lives.

If Jesus finds our hearts well disposed and free of the world and of worldly desires, He fills them with His love, and this love is so beautiful, so amiable, so delightful, it gives us strength to become masters of the world and of ourselves; it forms the greatest happiness of our lives here below, as well as our blessedness for the eternal hereafter.

I should like to explain this at greater length, but the limits of this letter will not allow it. I beseech you to purify your hearts more and more. The season is most favorable for it, for we are now in Lent. Meditate constantly on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Try to fill yourselves with the incomprehensible love which He has shown you by all the hardship that He underwent for your salvation and your perfection.

Regarding the schooling of your little Caroline, I am not yet able to tell you anything definitive. . . .

Adieu, dear brother and sister. Love God with your whole soul, and do not love the world. It is in the most holy love of Jesus and Mary that I am,

Your poor brother,

FRANCIS LIEBERMANN

P.S. My health is pretty good. I have not suffered any attack since last year. Nevertheless do not count on seeing me a priest some day.

It truly grieves me that I am unable to find anything for David. Make him practice patience. The good Lord will provide the means for his sustenance if David perseveres in his good intentions.
Francis' interview with his Jewish half-sister Sara. A mysterious visitor.

Letter Twelve  Issy, September 23, 1836  Vol. 1, p. 166

Dearest Brother and Sister:

It is about time that I should send you some news. Otherwise you may think I died on my way to this place. No, rest assured; God did not want me yet; I arrived here in very good health.

[Interview with Sara]

I stayed at Saverne Sunday and Monday. I used the means suggested by Christopher to see Sara [half sister of Francis Libermann], and they succeeded perfectly. At the suggestion of the parish priest, a kind person sent word to poor Sara that she had something to tell her and that it was pressing. The poor girl immediately suspected what it was, on account of the letter she had received the week before from Rabbi Isaac [half brother of Francis Libermann]. He told the family that he would come to spend a few days with them, and that he had something very sad and afflicting to tell them. He could have liked, he added, to tell them there and then, but dared not. Sara guessed what it was and expected to be called some day to see either Felix [Francis Libermann's brother] or me. She came at the appointed hour and I, for my part, had already arrived at the place decided upon. I wore my cassock, because my trunk was still at the stagecoach office, and I could not get it since it was closed on Sunday.

As she entered she glanced at me, but did not recognize me at first. There was a stranger in the room at the time
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

speaking with the person who had sent for Sara. I was apprehensive, fearing a scene and in fact one occurred. Sara turned again toward me and stared at me for several moments. I wanted to turn away so that she could not see me until the stranger had gone, but it was too late. She recognized me. Throwing herself on a nearby chair she hid her head between her hands, uttering a cry that sounded like a mixture of surprise and fright.

The mistress of the house, seeing this, quietly sent off the gentleman she was speaking to and left us alone. Then Sara, weeping, threw her arms around my neck and said to me in a heart-rending tone: “Oh! I am so unhappy!” I replied that I knew very well what she meant and that she could count on all of us; that we all loved her as much as we loved Elise [daughter of Samson]; that we were very much grieved to be separated from them, and that we would always be ready to help her in case of need.

The poor girl wept nearly the whole time I was with her. She spoke to me about her brother [Isaac], who treats her with much haughtiness and in an unworthy manner. On that account she does not love him as she loves us and it is this that makes her unhappy. Separated from all those who she loves, she is with one whom she loves not at all and who treats her worse than if she were a servant.

I showed her her brother’s letter. She wept again. In order to distract her from these sad thoughts, I asked her some joking questions about Jacob and Isaac and that cheered her up a little. When I showed her the letter of our dear A[lphonse], she cried so much that I could not finish reading it the first day. Nevertheless I made use of the occasion to speak to Sara about religion. This I did as a rebuttal of the calumnies that Rabbi Isaac is spreading against me. I told her that it was my duty to clear myself in her eyes of all the bad opinions that she might have formed
concerning my conversion. Sara found this change astonishing and at first did not want to believe that it was sincere. I spoke to her with a great deal of warmth on this point, and we were so moved that we wept like a couple of children, unable to utter a single word for a long time.

At last, I gained control over myself and dispelled her dejection. We spoke again about religion and, though she now believed my sincerity, I could obtain nothing from her. Her prejudices against our good Lord Jesus and our kind Mother, the Blessed Virgin, are so great, that it was impossible to set her right. Imagine my grief when I heard her blaspheme what I hold dearest in heaven and on earth!

She wanted me to remain the next day also, because she wished to see me again, and so I did. She came at seven o'clock in the morning, during the time that her mother was in the synagogue, and remained with me until ten. She came back in the afternoon at three o'clock and remained till half past five.

On the second day I again touched upon the subject of religion; but, seeing that there was nothing to be done, and that I was causing her pain, I did not insist. I asked her to write to me and allow me to write to her. At first she did not want to, but seeing through her reason, I promised her that I would never speak about religion in my correspondence. She accepted my offer on this condition and asked me to write her for the feast of Tabernacles.

Thus I left her without having obtained anything positive, though there was some hope for the future. I asked her several times to postpone marriage, or at least not to marry . . . [illegible] in order to become a . . . [illegible].

Here, then, in summary, is what I think about this poor girl. The misfortune of being plunged in such darkness is sad indeed but her case is one that ought to interest us very much. She has a very sensible heart and would make a good
Christian. She loves us ardently. Though she is still very far from the Christian religion, she gives great hope for the future. Everything depends on God now. Let us pray and perhaps He will save her.

If she associated more with Christians, especially good Christians, and less with Jews, her prejudices would gradually disappear. Let us leave her entirely in the hands of God. If the opportunity presents itself, show her a great deal of affection and give her all the assistance that you can. I assured her that you loved her very much and that you were particularly interested in her. As for the rest, she is adversely influenced by the reading of a great many novels. I urged her to give up such bad reading and she promised to do so.

[A Mysterious Visitor]

She told me about a singular experience she had had which I now pass on to you. You will recall that her mother provides lodgings for strangers and that formerly there were soldiers staying in [the study room]. One evening a young man a little taller than myself came in. He was thin, well built, with blue eyes and almost blond hair. When he entered the room he said: . . . [illegible]. They answered in the affirmative. He sat down on the sofa as if lost in thought. He then addressed innumerable questions to Sara. They were all about our family. He told her among other things that he too had several brothers but he did not know where they were, and that he had not seen them for a long time. He talked so much that Sara thought he was half mad. This amused him, but he pestered her so much with all his questions that she finally left him and began to work.

Meanwhile one of the soldiers who boarded in the house came in and the stranger now began to fire a multitude of questions at him. He said that he too had been a soldier but
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

had been discharged; he then read his discharge aloud but Sara paid no attention to what the two were saying.

The following morning when the mysterious stranger had gone, the soldier who had spoken to him returned to see Sara and told her that the “young fool” who visited her the previous evening was a Libermann, for he had read that name on the document that contained his discharge.

Sara ran quickly to the room which the gentleman had occupied to see if he had left any writing behind, but found nothing. She then went to the various inns of the town but the man was nowhere to be found.

I don’t know what to make of that story. This happened a long time ago. The man seemed to be between thirty and forty and was not well dressed. Sara has not received any news about him since.

Adieu. I must stop now, so that Felix and his wife may add a few words. Let us love Jesus and Mary and always pray for each other, my dear sister-in-law. Pray for me. I promise you that I will not forget you.

Yours sincerely in Jesus and Mary,

Francis Libermann

P. S. Do not forget me when you see Mr. and Mrs. Halle. They gave me many proofs of their friendship and I will never forget them. I recommend myself to their prayers. Give my regards to the Reverend pastor and his assistant. I will always be infinitely grateful to them for all their kindness towards me.

Francis and Elise [children of Dr. Samson Libermann] should not be angry because I did not write specially to each

1This soldier may have been Henoch Libermann, a brother of Father Francis Libermann, who probably joined the army and disappeared without trace (cf. Notes et Documents, vol. 13, App., p. 89).
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

of them. When they grow older and are able to read my letters and write to me, I will not fail to write to them. They must try to be good and not fight with each other and should love each other with all their heart. They must never speak ill of each other. Tell them that I love them very much. May God protect you all and make all your children perfect Christians.

13

Faithfulness to God’s grace. On frequent confession and Holy Communion. A method of meditation.

Letter Thirteen Issy, {November ?} 1836 Vol. I, p. 168

Dear Brother:

[Faithfulness to God’s Grace]

I gave thanks to God when I saw by your letter how greatly you desire the spiritual advancement of your soul. You are persevering in the firm and sincere will of living like a true disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ. But you have not yet succeeded in carrying out the wonderful designs which God deigned to inspire, and for this I am very sorry.

I know very well, however, that sooner or later, God will give you the strength to execute them. At least I have every reason to expect it, because in the ordinary course of Providence in the conduct of souls, when He enlightens us on points so important and so hidden from men of the flesh, He never fails to make us attain the perfection which He shows us, especially when He imbues us with a very lively and sincere desire for it. I have noticed this in a great number of persons.

47
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

It is true that they are usually more faithful than you are, and they go to work with joy and delight. Nevertheless, it often happens that they are languid for a long time, either because of the malice of the devil, who deceives us in one way or another in order to make us give up our resolution, or on account of natural weakness and negligence. But God, as a rule, finally triumphs in our souls. God is not like men, who parade their riches, but do not bestow them on those to whom they show them. He likes to show His treasures to those whom He wishes to favor with His love, but He shows them to us only for the purpose of giving them to us.

Take courage, therefore, and do not grow despondent over your present weakness. You have been unfaithful until now. Ask for the grace to be more faithful in the future. It is the enemy who holds you back with all kinds of fears and heartaches. Why do you let him jeer at you in this way? Put your whole trust in God, and trample this scorpion under foot. Since God is for you, how can this insect hurt you? Raise your heart above creatures. Why always pay attention to men? They are as flies that buzz around your ears. And is there any reason why you should yield to excitement and trouble on account of buzzing flies?

[On Frequent Confession and Holy Communion]

Let me repeat the advice I already gave you at Illkirch. There is only one thing for you to do to get yourself out of trouble. You must quit your confessor. Whatever his reaction might be, it will not worry me and it should be of no concern to you. You should go to confession instead to Father Mühe of Strassbourg. I cannot think of any better remedy for your problems, and they are real problems. If you confide in Father Mühe you will soon find it easy to frequent the sacraments. Start with a general confession.
This point is of the greatest importance. After this confession you will see how light your heart is and with what ease you can make your ordinary confessions. Afterwards you should approach the tribunal of penance every two weeks.

If you are afraid of receiving Holy Communion oftener, you might at first receive this great sacrament once a month, but your desire will gradually increase. The love of Our Lord will grow in your soul and then a fortnight will appear very long to you. You will wish to receive Holy Communion more frequently and you can easily do this then, for your soul will be purified more and more and you will finally become a true Christian, whose joy and true life are no longer centered on the earth. You will no longer live except by faith and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will be your happiness. He will thus achieve your sanctification here below by His love, which alone will fill your heart, and afterwards He will be your reward, the consummation of your holiness and your supreme blessedness.

Therefore strengthen your courage; act vigorously. Once you have given the decisive blow to the devil, who keeps you entangled in his net, he will, to his shame and confusion, be obliged to leave you, and the grace of our Divine Savior will triumph fully in your soul.

Pay attention to this also. Look upon the Holy Spirit residing personally in your inmost soul, through the power of Our Lord. It is He who urges you to give yourself entirely to God. He is willing to act, but you bind His hands by your indecision and your fears. Behold with what love He urges you, and you impede His actions! Give Him freedom of action and you will see what great things He will bring about in you.

You are afraid of approaching the Holy Eucharist for fear of profaning it. Why not take measures to cast out all such fears? Make the state of your soul known to a prudent
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

and wise man and your fear will disappear. Our Lord comes to us in the spirit of love in this incomparable sacrament. All is love in it, so why fear? If you are afraid that your faith is not strong enough, go to Him and He will fortify it more and more. Keeping away from Him is the surest way of languishing and always remaining weak.

Jesus said that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Try to walk in this Way and you will reach His Heavenly Father, for it is only through Jesus that we can reach God the Father. Jesus is the Truth; go to Him and you will be enlightened. Nothing will remain hidden from you. If you wish to have life in you, it is Jesus who is the Life, and He alone; no one else is the source of life. He has told us, moreover, in just so many words that if we do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man we shall not have life in us. So it is not surprising that you are feeble, timid, and embarrassed. Approach Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar and you will have everything, for you will have life, not an ordinary life, but the life of God which contains in itself all understanding, all greatness, all glory, all strength and all love.

[A Method of Meditation]

I am not at all surprised to hear that you are having a good deal of difficulty in meditating. There are several reasons for this. The first is that you have not yet made an act of courage to surmount the greatest obstacles; that is, you have not yet made a general confession, you have not changed your confessor nor sought direction, I mean by this last word that you must, first, without fear, make known to a man of God everything that takes place within you, and then be guided by his counsels. I promise you that this single act will give the freedom you desire so much. Ask advice and God will enlighten you; and He will give you the strength

50
to follow it. I believe that there is no one for you but Father Mühe to help you in your part of the country. If you want to correspond with Father Mollevault [of St. Sulpice Seminary] regarding those matters, I think I can obtain his permission for you to do so; in that case you send me a letter expressing simply what you seek and what obstacles you meet with. After that you can fearlessly follow his advice. When you write, however, speak simply, avoiding praise or flattery.

Lack of preparation and want of method are the second and third obstacles. That is why I want to give you briefly a procedure you can follow. Afterwards I shall suggest a subject for meditation, as if it were intended for myself. This will make it easier for you to follow the method which I shall apply to the subject I have chosen.

Meditation is composed of four parts: preparation, entrance, the body of the mental prayer, and the conclusion.

[Its Preparation]

*The preparation* is manifold, but I say without fear of contradiction that most important is the distant preparation, which consists, firstly, in a great purity of heart, that is, in freedom from every mortal sin (this is absolutely necessary) and in a firm will not to offend God even venially.

We must avoid every attachment to, and affection for creatures, especially if these sentiments are lively. It is not necessary for us to possess all these dispositions in a perfect degree, but the purer we are the greater the ease with which we can meditate, and the more graces we acquire for ourselves.

Secondly, it involves watchfulness over ourselves—a watchfulness free from worry and self-seeking. We must watch over our senses, not allowing them to be occupied too much with creatures, and suppressing their unruly move-
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

ments. Avoid, for instance, vivacity, anger, trouble, and all the other passions that agitate the mind and take away peace of heart.

Thirdly, this distant preparation requires a sincere and resolute desire to advance in the perfection of the love of our Divine Savior by self-denial and prayer. This desire, I think, exists in you but you worry too much and are too easily discouraged.

These preliminary dispositions are of the utmost importance, but you must take notice that it is not necessary to have them from the beginning. It is enough if we aim at them, and quietly strive to acquire them with the grace of God. For in all this we must put our confidence in God, never in ourselves or our resolutions.

Your meditation will not be as fruitful in the beginning as later on when you have made some progress in those dispositions. But do not be discouraged. When you began your medical studies, you certainly encountered difficulties and experienced some annoyance. Well, aren't you willing to do for the love of God what you have done for the sake of knowledge or for your own sake?

The interest that urges you to the holy exercise of meditation is infinitely greater than all other interests on this miserable earth. Try, therefore, dear brother, to overcome all these obstacles. They are not as hard to conquer as you think. Our Divine Savior will combat them for you. You have only to go ahead with a firm will to love and to serve Him with your whole heart and with full confidence in Him to be sure of triumph. And He Himself will be your reward not only for all eternity, but even now in this life. What recompense for so small an effort! What happiness for such trifling pains!

The immediate preparation consists in foreseeing the previous evening the subject of meditation for the next day
and in preparing it in your mind. This is indispensable, because otherwise we do not know where to begin or what consideration to make. When left to its own devices, our mind opens itself to all kinds of thoughts, just for want of something positive on which to focus its attention. We must, moreover, recollect ourselves a little in the evening before going to bed and rid ourselves of all things foreign to the subject—unless charity demands that we take care of a sick person, for in such cases everything else must be put aside. Finally we must keep our mind disengaged from all creatures and in a state of quiet peace before God, to the fullest possible extent, until the next morning after meditation.

[Beginning of Meditation]

So much for the preparation. Now we come to the meditation proper. It is advisable to begin immediately upon rising, for God wishes us to offer up to Him the first fruits of the day. Withdraw in all peace and interior tranquility into a room where no one will disturb you. Kneel down there while recollecting yourself interiorly. Recite some vocal prayer calculated to prepare your mind for a more profound recollection, but recite it with a feeling and disposition capable of leading the mind and the heart to interior recollection. Then excite within yourself sentiments of adoration, respect and love, because God has condescended to allow you to be in His holy presence and to be united to Him. Try to convince yourself by a few considerations that God is present in the place where you are, that He is in your own soul, on which He is pleased to bestow His graces and His love. This conviction is useful in rendering more sensible to us God's holy presence and the great graces which He confers upon us by coming into us.
These considerations may be taken from Holy Scripture; for instance, from the words, "In Him we live, and move, and have our being," from the words and example of our Divine Savior, or from some other thought that moves us. Penetrated by this conviction, we naturally enter into deep sentiments of adoration, of love, of gratitude, of humiliation in appearing before God, of being so poor, so wretched, so covered with sin, and deserving of the severest punishment.

We may give ourselves over to all kinds of sentiments of a similar nature. We must also try to be convinced, before entering into meditation, that of ourselves we are incapable of doing anything, and must expect all our help from God alone.

After these few acts, we pass to the consideration of the subject that we proposed to ourselves. Let us take, for instance, the necessity or the utility of frequent communion. We can begin, I suppose, with the consideration of Our Lord in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. If it is some other truth, we consider our Divine Savior in the circumstances relating to this truth. We may also, if we wish, direct our attention to the Person of the Father, the Holy Spirit, the Most Holy Trinity, or to a saint; but we must always begin by giving our homage to God with a view to the subject of our meditation. In general it is better to direct our consideration toward Our Lord, because this enables us to fix our attention more easily.

We begin, therefore, by inwardly fixing our mind upon our Divine Savior in the Most Blessed Sacrament. We then enter into a profound sentiment of adoration and of love for Him, considering the love with which He awaits us in this sacrament and the desires which animate Him in overwhelming us with His graces and favors. We may consider His grandeur, His glory, His power, His kindness, His wisdom, as well as His humiliation. His annihilation, and the homage
which the angels and the saints render Him in this sacrament. We may also unite ourselves in heart and mind with the angels and saints, especially with the Blessed Virgin, for the purpose of rendering, simultaneously with them our own homage though it may be feeble and wretched. It is not necessary to produce all these sentiments. A single one may suffice.

[The Body of the Meditation]

Having accomplished this first point, which is the entrance, we pass imperceptibly to the body of our meditation, which contains the considerations of the subject upon which we have decided to meditate. These considerations must tend, first of all, to convince us of the truth upon which we are meditating; they should lead us to the practice of the virtue or the avoidance of the vice which form the subject of our meditation in virtue of the conviction which those considerations produce in our soul. It is thus that we gradually learn how to give ourselves entirely to God.

We are encouraged and strengthened by the grace of God, which produces this intimate conviction in us, through the instrumentality of the meditation and the application of our mind and heart to those truths. Thus, in meditating on the subject of Holy Communion, after rendering due homage to Our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist, we try to convince ourselves of the importance of receiving Him as often as possible in this sacrament.

This may be done, first, by considering the love which Our Lord displays and His ardent desire to dwell within us in order to communicate that love to us. We consider how ungrateful we would be if we refused the great benefit which He offers, the great injury we would as it were inflict upon Our Lord, who desires so ardently to come to us, if we refused Him this satisfaction and rejected this grace. We may
also consider how He comes full of love, and not for the purpose of judging us; and, consequently, how wrong we are in fearing to approach Him, since, instead of coming with an air of severity, He comes with the meekness of a lamb and with an admirable love. We may consider finally that, in remaining at a distance, we nullify the designs of sanctification which Our Lord has formed for us in this adorable sacrament, etc.

Secondly [our conviction may be strengthened] by the consideration of our own advantage. We must recognize, on the one hand, the incomparable good of which we deprive ourselves by refusing to partake of the Blessed Sacrament and, on the other hand, the love which will fill our heart if we approach our Divine Savior. We must consider that we shall there find our real life, our strength, and the source of all graces. Our Lord Jesus comes into our soul for the purpose of nourishing it, making it live of His own substance, and making it love God the Father with His own love.

Thirdly, [we strengthen our conviction] by the consideration of the damage that will result if we abstain from receiving Holy Communion. We deprive the angels and saints of the extreme joy they feel at the sight of this great grace bestowed upon a sinner. And we deprive ourselves of the greatest and most incomprehensible good which Our Lord gave us when He came upon earth, and of the most precious gift that can be made to a creature.

We jeopardize our perseverance by refusing this great aid, to which perhaps in the plan of God it is attached; therefore we may in fact deprive ourselves of grace and of final perseverance. We shall have to render an account to God for the refusal of so great a grace. It would be well to recall to mind the parable of those who were invited to the wedding feast but refused to go, and to convince ourselves that we would be in a similar position, etc.
It is not necessary to make many of those considerations; a single one will suffice if it fills up our time for meditation. We must intermingle them with sentiments either of our baseness and misery, or of love, respect, adoration, etc. toward God, Our Lord, or the saints; the more they are intermingled with these sentiments, the better our meditation will be.

[Conclusion—Practical Resolution]

Next comes our progress to the third part, which is the conclusion. This consists in the return to self, for the purpose of examining how we have failed regarding the truth upon which we are meditating; what we ought to do in order to conform to it; or what the cause of our failures could be. In our example [frequent Holy Communion], it may be the fear of not being in a condition to receive Our Lord. We therefore make a resolution to remove the obstacles. For example, we shall prepare the best we can for communion, we will take strong resolutions and calm our mind, putting all our confidence in God and, after we have taken all steps to prepare ourselves properly, we firmly resolve to go to Holy Communion as often as possible. These resolutions must be made with great firmness and great confidence.

Resolutions must be practical and not too vague and general, and we must make it our duty to carry them out at the earliest opportunity. Knowing our weakness, we must earnestly beg our Divine Savior to make us faithful, and call to our aid the Blessed Virgin, our Guardian Angel, our patron saint, and any other saints to whom we have devotion.

Finally, we should choose a good thought or a holy sentiment, which has touched us most during our meditation, for the purpose of recalling it very often during the day, for instance, a text of Holy Scripture such as: "In Him we live
and move and have our being.” This St. Francis de Sales calls a spiritual bouquet.

It would be good to use the texts of Holy Scripture habitually for the purpose of convincing ourselves of some truth, or exciting affection for some virtue. In this, however, there must be no appearance of research. We should make those considerations in a very simple, very affectionate and most practical way; this is the great art of a man of prayer.

Think, at your leisure, on all that I have told you regarding meditation. Read this letter frequently so that you will become familiar with it and make it part of you. If there is any passage that you don’t understand, ask me to explain it to you, quote the entire passage and the part of meditation to which it refers, so that I may understand what aspect gives you difficulty.

Regarding the resolutions, I forgot to tell you that they are very important and that you should never end your meditation without making some resolution. I repeat that resolutions must be made with firmness, that they must be precise, definite and not vague in regard to their object and the time for their fulfillment. I tell you once more to put your confidence in God alone and to pray constantly for the intention that you may be able to effect those resolutions.

I beg our Divine Savior to give you an understanding of these things and the power to execute them. I hope He will give you the necessary grace for that purpose. Be careful not to be discouraged if the first attempts are not as successful as you wish. Remember that grace is given to all those who persevere. We belong to Jesus and Mary. This is the foundation of all our hope. I am sincerely,

Your brother,

Francis Libermann
P. S. The Reverend pastor of Saverne received me graciously and offered me hospitality for as long as I desired to remain with him. It was only in the beginning that there was a misunderstanding. He was expecting a visit from a professor of the Junior Seminary of La Chapelle, who was his great friend. Seeing me arrive in the middle of the night, he came running into the courtyard thinking that I was the professor, and this upset him for a moment. I left him the reliquary to put in one of the missions attached to his parish because he already has one in the principal church.

I am feeling very well. I seem to have much more strength in my limbs after this trip.

Don't forget to give my best regards to Mr. and Mrs. Halle. Felix has not yet been able to recover the entire sum which the bankruptcy of his bookseller may cause him to lose. He will pay you when he recovers the money.

I have no room left for a word to my dear sister-in-law. I will write in a month and beg her to have patience with me. I was delighted with the letters from Caroline and Marie and will reply to them also next month, for I have not a free moment now. Pauline has not written. I don't know whether it is through shyness or because she does not know what to say.

Rejoice over your poverty, which is like that of Mary. God alone is our happiness. Be a living example for your children.

Letter Thirteen  Issy, December 27, 1836  Vol. 1, p. 170
Dear Sister in Jesus and Mary:

[Rejoice over your Poverty]

I wish you a Happy New Year in the names of our good Father and Lord Jesus, and Mary our well-beloved Mother!
I wish you, not what you wish, but rather what Jesus and Mary wish for you, for our own wishes are not always what is best for us. On the contrary, it is a great good fortune for a Christian when God deprives him of what his heart seeks according to its natural craving, however reasonable the desire may otherwise appear.

I exhort you, therefore, my dear sister, to rejoice with me that God deigns to try you at times and to deprive you of things that you think are necessary to make you happy in this world. Oh! I beg you don’t try to be fortunate and well-thought of in this poor world; for the happy ones of this world are rarely happy in the eyes of God. Most of them will be wretched throughout all eternity and those who are esteemed and respected in this world are rarely estimable before God and His saints.

You must see how the good little Infant Jesus is ignored and despised by the world! Among all those who were in Bethlehem on the great day of Christ’s nativity, there were surely none in the city less esteemed than the blessed Virgin. She was not much favored with earthly goods and that is why the people declined to admit her into any house of the little town so that she was obliged to withdraw to a stable like a beggar.

Mary was nonetheless Queen of heaven and earth. She was the one whose beauty surpassed the Seraphim in riches, glory and splendor and dazzled the greatest in heaven. The Child Jesus, the most lovable and adorable Child Jesus, was poor from the beginning of His life until His death and an object of contempt and neglect by the world.

[God Alone is Our Happiness]

That is why I do not choose to wish you what, according to nature, would suit and please you most, for you would find it a curse rather than a good wish. No, I shall wish you
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

nothing of the kind. The love of Jesus and of Mary are far better than the pleasures, the satisfactions and the enjoyments of the world. Since these two orders of things cannot exist together, it is far more preferable to renounce everything that can flatter nature, so that we may become true children of God.

If we are the children of God, all our joy and happiness must be in God and all our desires must be limited to making ourselves pleasing to the Father who is so dear to us. The true means of pleasing Him and of becoming acceptable in His sight is to refuse to seek our well-being and satisfaction on earth and in earthly things. St. John the Apostle, who loved Jesus and Mary so much and was loved by them so tenderly in return, counselled the faithful not to love the world and what was in the world. The reason he gives is that in the world we seek only pleasure, wealth and honor; and he says that they who desire these things are cursed by God, and they shall never be His children until they have renounced these evil desires which are an abomination before Him.

As long as we still esteem the world, as long as we think there is something lacking in our happiness because we do not cut a very brilliant figure in this world, we cannot be in peace, we cannot be true servants of Jesus Christ, who wants us to despise the world with all its grandeurs and to forget it completely. Only then do we begin to be happy, because God fills us with His graces, a single one of which gives us more joy and happiness than the whole world with all its pomp, wealth and pleasures.

[Be a Living Example for Your Children]

For you, my dear sister, the mother of a family, who desire to raise your children according to the maxims of the faith and the holy religion to which God has graciously called
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

you, it is a duty, and one of your greatest duties, to conquer in yourself every stirring of self-love, for you must give example to your dear children so that they may imitate you in everything they see you do, and they certainly will imitate you.

If you live in a holy manner, your children will try to copy the sentiments of faith, piety, meekness, and the love of God and the Blessed Virgin that they see in you, and they will sanctify themselves. On the contrary, if they notice in you the least vestige of self-love or of regret—regret because you cannot enjoy the world, or because you don’t have the wealth, the honors and the esteem you eagerly desire—they will nourish the same feelings in their souls. It is, therefore, doubly your duty to sanctify yourself.

Take care to avoid everything that might proceed from self-love—for men are full of it—such as resentment when you think that others have not shown you the attention to which you are entitled, the suspicion that they have been speaking ill of you, or that their opinion of you is not good, etc.

You must fill yourself with the thought that all of us deserve to be ill-treated by the world on account of our sins and that we are blessed if men contradict us. We must even love them as much as if they had done us the greatest possible good. Such is the will of Our Lord.

Likewise, we must never speak ill of others. I assure you that it is a very great misfortune if we forget ourselves so much as to speak ill about our neighbor. It is hard for such actions not to produce a bad impression upon children and it gives them the habit of doing the same. It has a tendency to embitter their hearts and make them bad. Moreover, it is very difficult, if not almost impossible, to make reparation for words thus spoken.
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMAN

I tell you all this because the world is full of these faults. You must also have meekness and peace in your heart; be mild and peaceful toward everybody, even those who wish you harm. Still, you must not believe too readily that anybody is against you. On the contrary, forget all the injuries that you have received at the hands of others.

If you do this, my dear sister, I can assure you that you will sanctify yourself and your family; the blessing of God will be shed upon you; you will pass your days in joy and peace, and an immense reward will await you in heaven.

Adieu, my dear sister. Begging Our Lord to fill you with His graces and favors, I am most sincerely,

Your brother,

FRANCIS LIBERMAN

14

The conversion of David. It should be an occasion to renew our own faith and fervor

Letter Fourteen Issy, May 29, 1837 Vol. 1, p. 171

Dear Brother and Sister-in-Law:

[The Story of David's Conversion]

I want to give you an account of yesterday's wonderful event. I count this day among those of my life when I was most filled with joy and contentment. [Our brother] David at last belongs to our Divine Savior. How can I refrain from rejoicing? He has become my brother according to the spirit—the only true brotherhood—which will last for all eternity. This grace is very great; let us pray God that David may profit by it.
His baptism took place yesterday at eleven o’clock; the ceremony lasted an hour, more or less. It was very beautiful and very touching; tears glistened in everyone’s eyes. His godfather, a man of faith and piety, was very much moved. David himself was not less affected. I found him well prepared, much better than I was in the same circumstances. He is full of faith and good intentions at present. I hope that he will persevere in the good sentiments which God has given him.

David will have to take strict precautions because he will not find his brother [Alphonse] in America very helpful. Perhaps he will even find Alphonse ready to turn him aside from his religious duties rather than urge him to fulfill them. I merely express my fears without having any positive reasons that such is the case. Still I have cause to doubt; perhaps David’s arrival will do Alphonse some good.

But we must come back to the history of our new convert. David arrived in Paris at the place we agreed on, and on the morning that you told me he would come. I met him at Felix’s where we breakfasted together and, since then, I have been breakfasting three times a week at the home of Felix, who by now must be bankrupt on that account!

I took David to Father Martin, S.J., for the purpose of having him instructed in the Christian religion. Father was just what was needed, and they became the best of friends from the very first. I did not, however, dare to tell him at first that I was going to take him to a Jesuit Father, for fear of upsetting him. It was only when I saw that he was well satisfied with the priest that I told him who he was. They arranged matters very amicably together within eight days and the priest found David so well instructed that he did not hesitate to baptize him on the Sunday of Corpus Christi.

Mr. Drach [Jewish convert and later librarian at the Vatican] took care to provide him with a godfather and a
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

godmother, Mr. and Mrs. Récamier. I confess that I was sorry for this at first, because of the bad impression it might make on David, who had expressed the desire of having either Felix or me, with our sister-in-law. Now I am delighted with it, because Mr. Récamier is a saintly man, filled with such faith that I am astonished. I hope his example and his prayers will influence our brother to make him persevere in his good dispositions.

On the other hand, when I saw the great interest that Mr. Drach takes in all of us, I was indeed greatly moved. He was most attentive to David during the ceremony, always at his side, making him rise and kneel down when necessary, showing him the prayers and instructing him in everything he had to do. He went to all kinds of trouble to arrange the details. He even neglected his own affairs to give his whole attention to them.

The ceremony took place at Stanislas College. Mr. Drach did not invite many persons because he knew that David wished to make his abjuration without too much publicity. . . . I was particularly touched by the exorcisms at the door of the church. David was given the names of Mary, Joseph, Philomena. After the baptism he assisted at a low Mass at which he received his first Holy Communion, being still clothed with the robe of innocence. It was plainly visible during all those beautiful ceremonies that he was full of sentiments of faith and piety.

Tomorrow, Tuesday, he will be confirmed in the Convent of the Religious of the Sacred Heart. The ceremony will take place at half-past eight. You see then, my dear sister-in-law, how many favors Our Lord bestows upon your good Mary Joseph, and in so short a time. Let us pray that God may be pleased to preserve him in His grace, and to increase his piety and fervor, so that he may remain firm amidst the many dangers to which he shall be exposed in America.
This occasion ought to be a time of renewed fervor for us. It recalls to mind all the graces that God has bestowed on our poor family—graces which we had not merited in any way. Let us also remember the signal favors He has conferred on each of us in particular as well as our numerous infidelities to these great favors.

See how full of mercy our good Jesus is for us: He has taken us from mire and misery, in order to attach us to Himself. We were unfaithful and He should have abandoned us, but instead of doing that, He redoubled His favors, and at length compelled us to give ourselves to Him and to love Him tenderly. Let us love, I entreat you, this dear Lord, this sweet Jesus, our Father, and our well-beloved Savior; let us give Him our whole heart with all its desires and affections. Let us get rid of our "self," of our self-love; let us renounce Satan, his works and his pomps.

We renounce Satan by giving our hearts to God alone, by loving Jesus with the deepest affection of our souls. We renounce the pomps of Satan when we detach our minds and our hearts from the world's deceitful vanities, and when we close our ears against the praise of men and the expressions of esteem they may manifest to us. We renounce the works of Satan when we refuse to give ourselves up to the desires of the world's frivolous pleasures, when we resist the disorderly affections of our heart, when we love God alone, when we seek to render ourselves pleasing to Him in all things, and when, for His sake, we love our neighbor, our enemies, and all those who wish us evil, dislike us, and speak ill of us. This is what we have promised to God in our baptism.
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANNN

Let us pray to our dear Lord Jesus and to the Blessed Virgin, that we may obtain the grace to accomplish this holy promise perfectly; its fulfillment will make us true Christians. We belong to God and to Mary.

Francis Libermann

P. S. Please tell my brother that his package of books has been ready for a long time. There is one missing which Felix wishes to bind. There is a letter in the package which is addressed to my brother.

15

New Year's wishes. The spirit of detachment. Educate your children for heaven.

Letter Fifteen Rennes, December 31, 1837 Vol. 1 p. 365

Praised be Jesus and Mary!

Dear Brother and Dearest Sister in Our Lord Jesus Christ:

[Live for Eternity]

I pray to Jesus and Mary that they may overwhelm you with their spiritual blessings during the year which is about to begin, as they have blessed you in a temporal way during the one that has just passed. Raise your minds and your hearts to God, and do not always remain completely on earth. You see very well, my dearly beloved, how quickly this earthly life is passing away; it seems but an instant since I wished you a Happy New Year and I have to do it again. A few moments yet like those we have already spent,
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

and we shall see everything come to an end; then will begin a great year which shall never end.

Therefore, raise your hearts on high, where you are destined to pass this eternal year in the light, the love, the splendor, and the glory of our Father and Lord Jesus, to whom along we belong with all that we are, all that we possess, and all that we can do.

Live like souls who belong to Him entirely. He Himself deigned to pass some years in this world for the purpose of drawing us to Himself and of teaching us how to live solely for His Father, to whom belongs all homage, all glory, and love. Be faithful then as you are resolved to be. Do all things as souls who are here only as transients, and who labor only for the glory and the love of that great Master, who shall some day be all their light, all their glory, all their love, and all their inheritance.

[The Spirit of Detachment]

Never seek your satisfaction and enjoyment here below; do not become attached to this wretched earth. God has given you many children: Is it to provide them liberally with earthly goods? No, not for that! He has an only Son, whom He has begotten from all eternity; He sent Him upon earth and “in Him He was well pleased.” Yet did He bestow the goods of this world freely upon Him? Far from it. He willed that this well-beloved Son should be in continual poverty and privation. And do you, then, love your children more than Jesus’ Father loved Him? Love them, I beg of you, in the same manner that God the Father loved His Son; that is, with a holy and a heavenly love. Procure for them what alone is important—the salvation and the sanctification of their souls.
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

[Educate Your Children for Heaven]

Consider yourselves very fortunate in that God was pleased to use you to have seven souls more destined to glorify Him eternally in heaven. Do not be afflicted at the trouble that these dear souls will cause you. Do not look at things in a base and human way but raise yourselves up even to the bosom of God, and contemplate the seven crowns that you will find some day in Paradise, the seven brilliant stars that you will place in the heavens. It is your duty now to make them shine forth in great splendor, by the Christian education which you will give your children and which will make great saints of them someday. Is not this sufficient compensation for a little inconvenience on this poor earth?

But if you worry, if you think only of procuring, according to the world’s estimation, a more brilliant career for these dear children, where will this end except in inspiring them with earthly preoccupations, and in preventing you from using the necessary means for their sanctification? Nay, more than that, it will make you turn away from the paths of perfection in which you have undertaken to walk.

Have no anxiety, therefore, on this ground; they are not your children; as you see very well, they are God’s children. Their heavenly Father knows well what they need, and He will take care of everything. Let Him act; confide in Him; abandon the care of these dear children entirely to Him. You are here only as governors, who are to make them worthy of their heavenly Father, and capable of some day entering into His kingdom.

Distribute to these children the goods that their Father has confided to you for them; it is not for you to ask of Him, “Lord, why doest Thou not give them more?” He knows better than you do what is suitable for them. Labor peacefully to maintain this family of God, but without anxiety.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

and with full abandonment to your heavenly Father, who is also your children’s Father.

If you seek their temporal prosperity with such greed and worry and if you desire it so anxiously, shouldn’t you worry that it is because of ambition, or through an overestimation of the goods of this earth? Wretched goods that fill the world with all kinds of sins, and people hell! Put aside then these vain desires and these useless or rather pernicious anxieties.

Have recourse to the Blessed Virgin, our good and tender Mother. Place your children in her arms, and beg her to take care of them, not for the purpose of enriching them on earth, but to enable them to sanctify themselves in whatever state God may deign to place them.

I say this especially for you, my very dear sister-in-law. Try to advance in true Christian piety which is full of confidence [in God]. Forget those ugly goods of earth, those honors and distinctions. I well know that you yourself have renounced them, but you must also renounce them for your dear children, if you wish to be perfectly pleasing to Jesus and Mary.

Try especially to acquire that great confidence in God which you want so much. This, my very dear friends, is what I wish you with all my heart and I pray that Our Lord and His holy Mother will grant it to you.

I have not written you until now because I really had no time to do so. I am going to send this letter to Paris at the first opportunity, and it will be mailed from there.

[Some Special Requests]

Now I have a favor to ask you. We have here large vegetable gardens. Father Bursar wishes to raise the vegetables that are in demand in this country and he has asked me if I would be able to get them from Strasbourg; he wants large
cabbage from which sauerkraut is made. So may I ask you to buy seeds of that kind of cabbage?

Send me also, if you will, seed of red cabbage (I don’t know the exact name, but I believe it is the kind of cabbage that is most delicate and that is not found here). Please send along also some seed of the best and largest beets. If you have a kind of turnips that are better than elsewhere, send seed of them too. Send me also the seed of . . . [Hebrew word, perhaps horseradish]; it is a sort of bitter root and is very strong.

If you would be so kind as to send me those seeds it will be a greater service to us. It will cost you about thirty sous; the good Lord will reward you for it. Please buy seed of the best quality and send it to Reverend Leray, Seminary of St. Sulpice, Paris. . . . Could you send it by stage-coach as soon as possible?

Adieu! My best regards in the holy charity of Jesus and Mary. Give my love to all your dear children and wish them a very happy year, especially Francis and Elisa. I beg Elisa to wish a Happy New Year to little Leo [her brother] for me.

Entirely yours,

FRANCIS LIBERMAN

P. S. My health is holding up perfectly since I am here. I have enjoyed good health for nearly three years!

I am sending you the Life of Father Eudes, our Venerable and holy founder. You will find in it at least a little of his life, for it is not written as I should like it to be. Many facts are omitted. Please transmit to Father Liebermann, the Vicar General, the two volumes and the letter. They were given by Father Superior. They contain the Life and one of the works of Father Eudes. The pages are already cut; there was no other copy at hand.
Praised be Jesus and Mary!

Dear Sister in Our Lord:

I am truly afflicted because I have caused you such anxiety of late by not writing you for so long. Honestly, I did not realize that I had delayed so long writing you. I am rather busy here and time passes so rapidly that I lost track of the long interval between one letter and the next. I see now that it is about time to send you news about myself and realize that this time I have waited too long to do so. I beg your pardon for it before the good Lord; I will try to be more faithful from now on.

[True Piety]

Your letter caused me great joy before God, and this joy was all the greater because it has been such a long time since I received anything written by your hand. Yes, I will certainly pray for you every day, so that our kind Lord may grant you the gift of true piety.

If you wish to possess true piety, you should always, in your innermost heart, be very kind to every one around you. It is not enough for you to manifest in your conduct that exterior kindness which consists in saying a kind word, in being cheerful toward everybody, in being of service to all, even to those who do not love you. This kindness is necessary, and it is a great virtue to practise it in that way.
for the love of God and in order to please Him, but you should not be content with this. You should be still more perfect if you wish to attain true piety—such piety as your great model, the Blessed Virgin, possessed.

[Kindness Toward All, Especially in Speech]

You should also feel kindly toward everybody, even toward those who do not wish you well. You should never bear a grudge against them, never speak ill of them. You should even reject all thoughts that might be unfavorable to them. Forgive and love them in your heart, just as if they had done you a great service, without retaining any bitterness or dissatisfaction against them. Do all this with a good grace, for God's sake, and in order to please Him.

Guard against impetuosity; avoid anything that might indicate a certain testiness of spirit when a servant or a child does anything that displeases you or that is not right. Reprove gently; punish even, if necessary but do not let your sensitiveness gain the upper hand. This is very difficult; but think of the Blessed Virgin very often, and consider what she would have done in the circumstance in which you have failed, and resolve to imitate this kind Mother the next time.

When you have been at fault in anything whatsoever, do not be angry with yourself. We should be gentle toward ourselves as well as toward others. Ask God to forgive. Resolve not to commit the same fault again on a similar occasion and do not surrender yourself to sorrow and worry on account of it. If you fall repeatedly in spite of your resolution, do not become discouraged; have recourse to God and to the Blessed Virgin and try to amend your ways gradually.

Constantly remember that you must correct your faults if you wish to attain true piety. Remember also that you
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANNN

will fulfil the law of God if you have true charity for your neighbor. Keep guard especially over your words: it is through them that we most often fail in this world.

[Devotion to Mary and Love of Jesus]

Have a great devotion for the incomparable Mother of God. Think of her frequently during the day, and often address a short prayer to her in accordance with the spiritual and temporal needs of the moment. Confide all your sorrows and joys, all your fears and hopes to this tender Mother. Place your whole trust in her and do this for the sake of her well-beloved Son.

Perform all your daily actions for the love of God and for the purpose of pleasing him. Say to Him often from the depths of your heart: "Oh, my Jesus, how I love You! How I would wish to love You with my whole soul! My God, I wish to do everything to please You." Let such words as these be very often on your lips. If you do all this, I am confident that you will soon attain true piety. I shall pray with all my heart for this intention. In this sweet hope, I am, in the holy love of Jesus and Mary.

Yours sincerely,

FRANCIS LIBERMANNN

P. S. My best regards to my dear brother. We have received the seed and the plants which you sent us. I thank you in the name of Father Superior who is delighted with them.

This week I received a letter from our "Americans." I do not dare to believe all the beautiful things they tell me about their conduct. I know Christopher; he is a . . . [Hebrew word]. Undoubtedly he has not forgotten . . .
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMAN

[Hebrew word]. Felix [another brother in Paris] is a lazy fellow! He has left me for more than three months without a letter.

Regarding a visit to you, this will not be possible at all this year. I don’t know when it will be possible; the good Lord will arrange an occasion for that. [I add here short letters for your children.]

For Pauline

Dear Niece:

I am glad to know that you are at Illkirch. You will lighten the burden of your mother in housekeeping and you will edify your young brothers and sisters by your piety. Be mild and gentle towards them; yield to them rather than making them get angry. No doubt it is their duty to yield rather than yours, since you are the oldest, but you must give them the example in order to teach them how to behave.

Be satisfied, dear girl, with these few words. I would have liked to be able to write a complete letter to you, but the mailing costs are quite high. I do not love you less for all that, as you realize and that, after all, is what is most important. Words are nothing; it is the heart that matters.

For Caroline

Your little letter gave me great joy before God. Remain firm in your resolution. Watch over yourself; the world would like to seduce you, but don’t let yourself be taken by surprise. Love solitude and retreat; do not become enamored with social gatherings. Take care not to commit sin. Be filled with devotion for Mary, your Blessed Mother.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

Have recourse to her in all your needs and troubles. I don't imagine you better than you are but I gave you some advice in my last letter in order that you might become better. Make constant progress in the love of God.

For Marie

Dear Child:

Your letter tells me that you wish to love God. I could see this sentiment in it although you did not say it in so many words. You are right to have this desire and you should strengthen it in you more and more. Love the Blessed Virgin with all your heart. She is your good Mother, more so than mamma or your godmother. So you should love Mary more than mamma and papa, more than your godmother and more than your fond uncle.

Mary loves you so much that she wished to have you named after her. Be worthy of so beautiful a name. Be gentle, modest, pious, obedient to papa and mamma, and also very kind to your dear little brothers and sisters. Don't be so hasty and excitable; be full of modesty and gentleness. Ask the Blessed Virgin to have me to come to you, so that I may see you again and that we may have a talk in the garden as we did last year. Be very pious, try to please God and the Blessed Virgin, and you will obtain that grace, if not for this year, at least for another time. Dear godchild, do not forget to give my most friendly greetings to your godmother and to Papa Halle.

Adieu, my dear Marie, I have to leave you. Kiss dear little Elisa for me, and tell her I love her very much. I shall write her as soon as she knows how to read.
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

For Francis

Dear Boy:

I am very pleased with your letter. You want to be a priest some day. That’s fine! It is a good desire. But in order to do that you must try to behave well, you must be very pious, you must say your prayers well morning and evening, love the good Lord and the Blessed Virgin greatly, learn your catechism well, and prepare yourself well for your good First Communion. If you do all this well, the good Lord may help you to become a good priest.

There is one thing, however, that you frankly confess to me and which does not very well suit a future priest; so you must learn well and work hard. Have courage! The good Lord will hear you.

Adieu, dear boy. Kiss your little brothers Henry and Leo for me.

Your uncle,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN

17

Happiness when Our Lord demands a little sacrifice. Suffering together with Christ

Letter Seventeen  Rennes, August 11, 1839  Vol. 1, p. 370

Praised be Jesus and Mary!

Dear Brother and Sister:

I am going to tell you something which will no doubt grieve you very much and which you can guess even before I mention it. I was ready to leave; I had even made
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

the date of my departure known to my brothers in Paris, when suddenly came yesterday's news which absolutely prevents my leaving Rennes and Brittany. You can imagine what pain this will cause my brothers in Paris, for they were counting so much on my visit and will learn tomorrow that it has been cancelled. I wanted very much to make this journey for their good and for yours, as well as for my own edification and advancement, for I hope to be able to see you also, but the good Lord doesn't judge things according to your ways. It seems that He considers this journey useless at best. It is certain that it is not in conformity with His most holy Will.

[Rejoice When Our Lord Demands a Sacrifice]

There remains nothing for us but to rejoice about everything that He wishes to do with us, since it is His right to dispose of those who belong to Him and of all their actions and movements. He has done so in this case. Let us content ourselves with happily receiving and following His orders. We are His possession, His property; He is the absolute Master; and no one has any right to oppose His divine and adorable desires. He does with His property and to it what seems good to Him. Does the earthen vessel say to the potter, "Why do you make me thus?" Does it not allow him to fashion it according to his wishes? This is the way we must be in the hands of our Sovereign Master: docile, silent, unequivocally submissive to all His sacred decisions in our regard.

This seems hard to our nature, when the privation which He demands is considerable, and so much more when our desire is based on plausible motives; but my dear friends, it is precisely in such circumstances that we must show our great and genuine love for our God. We must make sacrifices for Him. He must cut deeply, tear, bruise and break our
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANNN

wretched heart to pieces, to make it a pleasing victim in the sight of His adorable Majesty, offered in union of love with Jesus, the great Offerer, and the great Victim of His Father for the salvation and sanctification of His elect.

Let us be overjoyed and jubilant therefore, and consider ourselves to be the happiest of men on earth because we are able to offer some small sacrifice to our God, thus rendering ourselves agreeable in His sight. But let us offer this sacrifice on the great altar of the holocausts, on the Cross of Jesus, and have it offered by the most pure and holy hands of this High Priest, who is always near the throne of His Father, interceding for His children.

[Suffer Together with Christ]

Whatever has happened is very much to your advantage. You have much suffering and trouble in this life; unite them to the trials of the crucified Jesus and consider yourselves victims immolated by the hand of God, together with His well-beloved Son. God's hand is His divine Will acting toward you through His most adorable Providence. Hold your neck peacefully and lovingly under this sharp sword which nothing can resist; raise your heart toward Him who immolates you and for whom you are immolated, keeping your soul in holy and complete submission. It is the divine love of Jesus which will serve as a fire to consume your souls and cause them to burn with an odor of sweetness before God in union with the adorable soul of Jesus and with the most holy and immaculate heart of Mary, and this for all eternity. What a blessing for you to have pains and privations in this world!

I would have liked very much to write to Marie and console her in the sorrow which the bad news I send in this letter will cause her; but this dear friend will have recourse to her most holy Patroness and Protectress, who will console
her much better than her poor godfather. I have not forgotten Pauline, Caroline and the other dear children. It would have been such a pleasure for me to have seen and embraced them, but the good Lord does not want it.

I have had the same thought about Francis that you had. I intended to take some steps when I was in Paris, but since I am not going there, I wrote yesterday to one of the principal directors of the junior seminary. Two conditions are required: first, that Francis intends to become a priest; and second, that he be incorporated into the diocese of Paris. I think that Father will give serious attention to that matter. Let us pray in the meantime that this may be successful. I shall write you his answer as soon as I get it.

Adieu! Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

Francis Libermann, acolyte.

18

His departure from the Eudists. Having nothing, he is the happiest man on earth.

Letter Eighteen  Lyons, December 12, 1839  Vol. 1, p. 672

Praised be Jesus and Mary!

Dear Brother and Sister:

It must surprise you to receive a letter addressed to you from Lyons. This is indeed strange, and I myself would not have expected this a year ago. Give your mind and your heart to Our Lord and neither judge nor examine things according to the spirit of the world, otherwise you will suffer great grief on my account. But if you see things in God,
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMAN

you will have no trouble finding peace and calm, and you will end by experiencing true interior joy. I should like to tell you exactly how things stand, but the good Lord does not want it; I must therefore remain silent. Be content then to remain in uncertainty.

[His "Imprudent" Departure from Rennes]

I have left Rennes forever. This is most imprudent, if not sheer folly, according to those who judge things in worldly ways. A certain future lay before me if I remained; I was certain to have the means of subsistence and also an existence that would have been honorable. But woe to me if I seek my ease on this earth and wish to be honored and esteemed! Dear friends, remember one thing: this world passes away; life spent in it lasts but an instant. When our flesh is falling apart in the grave, it does not matter at all that we have led a comfortable life on earth—our eternity will not be the happier for it. I understand that the happy ones of this world, those who consider only this earth, who wish only sensual pleasures, seek always to lead a comfortable and easy life and one full of honors.

But a priestly soul, one who is devoted to Our Lord and to His sole glory, must consider both comfort and discomfort, honor and humiliation, as things that are indifferent and inconsequential. Why seek to have an easy life upon earth unless it be because of self-love? Let us give ourselves to the love of Jesus, and not to the love of self. What does it matter if I am overwhelmed with all imaginable evils while I drag this flesh of corruption on this miserable earth, provided I belong to God and serve Him according to His sacred love? And what state is more favorable for living this life of love than one of crosses, privations, pains, and afflictions of all kind?

81
I have left Rennes. I no longer have any man or any creature on earth in which I may place my trust. I have nothing; I know not what will become of me nor how I shall even be able to live and subsist. I shall lead a life which, according to worldly standards, is despicable, forgotten, neglected, and lost.

A great number of those who loved and esteemed me, will disapprove my conduct. I shall perhaps even be treated as insane or as proud. I shall be despised and may even suffer persecution. And who on earth will give me even a little consolation in return? I am therefore a lost individual, unhappy for life. This is the only way in which the flesh can reason when it alone is the supreme counselor; but do we want to be men according to the flesh? If there were nothing in which to place our hope except mud and dung, in filth and human rottenness, I would be miserable indeed! Surely I should then make eternal lamentations! . . .

My dear friends, let us acknowledge that we have a Father in heaven! We have the great, most adorable Lord Jesus; we have His great and most admirable Mother! They will not abandon those who deliver, and completely surrender themselves to them for their glory and their love. Therefore, have neither fear nor distrust; acknowledge that I am the happiest man in the world, because I no longer possess anything but God, Jesus, and Mary; I am already in heaven, whilst still living on earth. If it pleases God to make me lead a hard and painful life, so much the better; He will give me His strength and His love, and that is all I need. My only hope is in Jesus and Mary; it should also be so for you.

But look at all this verbiage and I still have not come to the facts. All that I can tell you at this time is that you must have
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

no anxiety whatsoever about my lot. Consider me as one dead and buried; pray God for the good of my soul, and for the accomplishment of His most holy will. I cannot tell you at present what the good Lord demands from me; I shall merely say that I will continue the work which His infinite goodness has deigned to inspire and that I put all my trust in Him.

I believe that the time for explanations has not arrived. I beg you, in the name of your love for Our Lord and His most holy Mother, not to be angry with me on that account. It is His will that I remain silent. Moreover, such things ought not to be disclosed in a letter. I shall give you news later, but it may be quite a time before I can write. So don’t worry if I make you wait. Furthermore, I am not without hope that I shall be able to see you within the next two years. I have faith that it will come to pass. Be calm therefore and give yourselves more and more to God. Live with fervor and love, as true children of Jesus and Mary, in whose love I am,

Entirely yours,

Francis Libermann, acolyte

P.S.—My warmest regards to all the children. I especially urge Marie not to be sad because of this letter. Let her pray often to the most holy Virgin, asking especially that I may be able to visit you within the next eighteen months or two years. I greatly wish that she should apply herself in the meantime to the practice of the Christian virtues.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

19

Live for God’s glory. The spirit of sacrifice.

Letter Nineteen

Vol. 2, p. 44

Rome, Octave of the Epiphany, 1840

Praised be Jesus and Mary!

Dear Brother and Sister:

My last letter gave you a little anxiety about me. I am not exactly displeased at that, although I would have liked to spare you that trouble, for this has given you a chance to practice some of the Christian virtues.

Again today perhaps you will not be very satisfied by what I tell you, but I hope in any event that you will be more at ease knowing at least where I am.

[Live for God’s Glory]

Be children of God, as all true Christians ought to be, and you will then seek only the glory and good pleasure of your Heavenly Father. Learn this great lesson well and make it sink ever more deeply into your souls in the presence of Our Lord and His most blessed Mother. We are not in this world to enjoy the pleasures of life and to create happiness for one another on earth.

We are here to suffer, to glorify our heavenly Father, to live only by and for His love. When this great lesson, this Christian maxim, is the foundation of our life, we cannot fail to become perfectly pleasing to God and to live very happy lives on earth, for pain and privation will be true goods for our souls and our hearts will feed on them with delight.
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

We shall live in peace and in perfect docility under the hand of God, and this will constitute our great happiness and the sanctification of our souls. I say this to urge you not to worry any more about me and to make you submit joyfully, with a glad heart, to all that Our Lord will be pleased to do with me.

I am presently in Rome, occupied with a very important affair for the glory of God and the salvation of a multitude of poor souls that are neglected, forgotten, or lost in the Church of God. It concerns a foreign mission. This will make you fearful but don’t worry yet about something that is still distant and indefinite. There would be a question only about my leaving in the distant future, and it is still uncertain whether I shall go with the missionaries or remain in France.

[The Spirit of Sacrifice]

If I had to leave, I would greatly desire—and I ask this grace for you from the good Lord—that you be filled with joy and give thanks for it to Our Lord, and that you will never try to dissuade me from it. Occupy yourselves, therefore, instead with zeal for those poor neglected and wretched souls. Think of the great wretchedness of your own souls before God’s mercy manifested itself in your behalf. Remember that what you now are is due to the pure goodness and mercy of God. Hence you should appear ready to make the greatest sacrifices, to invoke and draw down that divine mercy on souls that are even more poor and wretched than you were before you shared in the kindness and goodness of God.

Well then my very dear friends, sacrifice something to Him who sacrificed Himself completely to obtain for you that great favor you now enjoy. Sacrifice this poor man who writes this way to you and rejoice fully that you can, in
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

this way, participate in the love of Jesus Christ for souls and in the great things He has done for their sanctification . . .

The first steps I have taken [for this enterprise] have met with some success; the difficulties will come later.

I beg you to speak on my behalf to the good Monsignor Liebermann [the Vicar General]. Ask him to give me letters of recommendation for Rome. I believe that they would be very useful. I hope that venerable priest will not refuse you this favor and that he will add this kindness to all the others. Please send those letters as soon as possible.

I close to leave some room on this letter for the good Mr. Drach, who may find time to add a few words. Keep silence concerning what I am telling you; I want to keep this secret for some time because of the great obstacles that will arise. Do not speak of it yet even to Felix. I shall write him at a later date.

To Jesus and Mary!

Entirely yours in their holy love,

   FRANCIS LIBERMANN, acolyte

I did not find Mr. Drach, but he is very well and has several times spoken to me about you.
Dear Brother:

I have just received your letter which gives me great pleasure. I want to reply at once even if there is no particular need for haste.

[The Affair of His Ordination]

I am very grateful to Our Lord because He has caused Bishop Roess to show you such great kindness and for making some of that goodness benefit me as well. I believe that it is a very legitimate means which the good Lord uses to enable me to ascend to the priesthood and, if this is His wish, I hope to profit by it.

Several respectable persons have strongly and constantly urged me to use every means to attain to the priesthood. I myself have seen clearly that I shall not be useful for the glory of God as long as I am not a priest. Nevertheless, I must confess that here in Rome I have not taken any steps in that direction.

I addressed myself to the Vicars Capitular [during the vacancy of the See of Paris after the death of Archbishop de Quélén]. They replied through Father Augé, who is one of them, that they could not send me dimissorials for receiving Orders because they were afraid of a relapse [into epilepsy]. They sent me an Exeat for the diocese of Rome...
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

to enable me to be ordained here although I had not asked for it. I have not made use of it nor have I taken any steps in that direction. I have not even said a word to any one here on that subject. I have nevertheless refrained from writing immediately to Paris to refuse the Exeat for fear that I might cause some displeasure, but I shall do so at the first opportunity.

Now, if the Most Reverend Coadjutor Bishop is willing to receive me into the diocese of Strasbourg, I shall still have time to ask an Exeat for Strasbourg instead of one for Rome. What I want to ask you in that respect is whether you have spoken to the bishop regarding my project for the missions, and if you have asked him that I be permitted to follow that vocation which God seems to desire for me; for I have in no way forced myself into this project and I have been greatly troubled at the sight of the great difficulties and sorrows to which I knew, from the beginning, I would be subjected. If the bishop is willing to grant me that favor, I shall be grateful during my whole life and promise that I shall never miss an opportunity for doing good in the diocese of Strasbourg.

If, through unforeseen circumstances, that project for the missions were to fail, I shall immediately be at the disposal of the bishop who will have the faculty to make use of me in any position he chooses, and I shall never be a burden to his diocese in case he has no work to entrust to me.

With regard to spending one month in the Seminary, this does not worry me. I shall be very happy to spend that amount of time in such retirement to prepare myself for so high a vocation. Moreover, I shall need a period of retirement to review my theology a little. It has been about ten years since I studied theology, for I thought I would never become a priest and hence considered such
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

study useless—especially since I had other occupations and the physicians had ordered me to seek rest. At St. Sulpice I was forbidden to study for the latter reasons. I believe, nevertheless, that it would not take long to refresh my memory for, although I did not engage in regular theological studies, my mind, during the intervening time, has been occupied principally with matters of dogma.

Another disadvantage resulting from that long interval, is that I have forgotten some of my Latin. You know that I have never been strong in speaking or writing in this language and it is probable that I shall have a little difficulty in speaking it. In regard to reading, I believe that I am understanding it better. I have great facility in understanding the Latin of Holy Scripture, the Holy Fathers and the Decrees of the Council of Trent. Occasionally I am able to understand Augustine and other Fathers at first sight or when I hear their works read in the refectory; Saint Bernard I sometimes find difficult but I have noticed that others, who had made very good studies in the humanities, did not understand him either. This makes me think that the reason for not understanding some texts is not my weakness in Latin but the particular twist in St. Bernard's thinking or something of the sort. I give all these details because I think it would be well to let the bishop know the exact situation, for his wonderful goodness toward our family should not be met with disappointment.

May I ask you to get me the necessary information concerning the examinations at the Seminary. . . . Regarding the testimonials, I shall have all that is required. Only, in Rome, I know nobody nor am I known by any one except One Jesuit Father [de Villefort] to whom I go to confession. I have preferred to lead a retired life instead of running about the streets. When one has acquaintances in Rome, one loses time. All those whom I told about my life "in retire-
ment” approved this policy. I have merely paid some visits out of politeness and continue to make such visits from time to time.

I am also unable to get a certificate from Cardinal Fransoni or his secretary; they do not know me well enough, for they each only saw me twice. They have sought information concerning my past conduct and would only be able to speak according to the testimony of others. I should not dare asking them for a certificate under such conditions. I believe sincerely that the Jesuit Fathers will not refuse to give me a testimonial.

[The Holy See Encourages His Plan for a New Congregation]

In respect to my own affairs, I can tell you that they have greatly improved. Cardinal Fransoni wrote me a very consoling letter, in which he strongly encourages me to persevere in my vocation. He says that the Propaganda has, from the very beginning, considered that the project was very good and very useful. It has never been thought proper to give formal approval, for Rome never grants such an approba- tion before it has seen results; we have first to be functioning effectively and when we are successful we shall have recourse again to the Holy See. The Sacred Congregation sent me a letter of encouragement; it was signed by Cardinal Fransoni. There are also other reasons for hope and we must continue to recommend the project to God and the Most Holy Virgin.

[The Danger of Vainglory]

You are always afraid that vanity will get mixed up and will spoil everything; you are right in entertaining that fear. I hope, nevertheless, that this vice will not take the upper-hand in my soul. I don't think that my enterprise was under-
taken through self-love nor do I recall that I ever experienced such a sentiment except once. It might be possible, nevertheless, that such a thing happened at other times, though I have no knowledge of it, but it is certain that it was merely a temptation and has never been dominant. Moreover, if I had such sentiments without being able to remember any of them, I have had the time and opportunity to correct myself for, from the time I left Rennes [the Eudist novitiate] until now, my self-love has never found an occasion for complacency. Besides, God is more kind than men. He pardons our faults of weakness easily and gives us His grace, even at the moment when we are offending Him. This is my hope: that He will give me His assistance in spite of my faults. Be tranquil then about all that. I let Our Lord free to do what He pleases. It is His affair and not ours. Adieu.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,
FRANCIS LIBERMAN, acolyte

Fondest greetings to my dear sister-in-law and to all your dear children.

21

He has been ordained a priest. The novitiate is ready. He desires personal letters from his nephews and nieces.
Letter Twenty One Amiens, September 18, 1841 Vol. 2, p. 497

The mercies of the Lord I shall sing forever

Dear Brother and Sister:

[Ordained a Priest]

I have to announce to you the great mercy and ineffable goodness of our Lord Jesus Christ toward an unworthy servant who does not even deserve to pronounce His holy
Name. This morning I was ordained a priest. God knows what He has granted me on this wonderful day! And God alone knows it, for it is not possible for man or angel to conceive it. You must all pray that it may be for His greater glory, for the salvation and the sanctification of souls and the edification of the Church that I have been raised to the priesthood. Ask Our Lord that He may sacrifice me for His glory, for it is to this that I must consecrate myself henceforth.

I shall say my first Mass next Tuesday at seven. Unite your intentions with mine; I shall offer you all to the Blessed Trinity in union with the adorable Sacrifice.

At seven on Saturday I shall offer the Holy Sacrifice at Our Lady of Victories in Paris, at the altar of the Archconfraternity. Unite your intentions with mine; I will remember you all. Let us also think of our pagan relatives and lukewarm Christians.

On Sunday the Mass will be for you alone; I shall say it in a chapel that is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. . . .

[The Novitiate is Ready]

The bishop [of Amiens] received me with great love and kindness. I had dinner with him yesterday; he will give us all the assistance possible.

I have visited our house; it is very beautiful; it will be large enough to house fourteen or fifteen persons. A “Brother” [i.e., a lay helper] is already installed there to keep watch over the furniture. We shall have a small chapel. Some good nuns have given us a beautiful statue of the Blessed Virgin; it is of wood, gilded and painted in natural colors; we have also candelabra. The Sisters are making vestments for us. They have also given us furniture. . . . You can see that the good Lord is very kind to us and provides things
beyond all our expectations . . . ; we are obliged to put our confidence in His goodness.

I forgot to tell you that we shall have a piece of land that will serve as a vegetable garden and some woods where we shall be able to stroll. The air is most healthful.

This should suffice for the present; I must hurry to finish. Adieu! Love Our Lord and His most Holy Mother with all your soul!

Entirely yours in their holy love,

Father Francis Libermann

My address is: La Neuville, near Amiens. We are about twenty minutes from Amiens, in a section of a hamlet that is quite secluded.

[I Want Letters]

I ask Pauline, Caroline and Marie to be patient a little longer. I cannot write to them now; I shall do it another time, or rather wait for their letters. As we have agreed among ourselves, this will be more useful for them. Adding a few words to a letter written to their papa would not mean very much—it would merely show that I remember them and I hope I don't have to prove such a thing, especially if my proof consists of just a little word. Moreover I won't be satisfied either with one small word from them. I want a letter and desire to be useful to their souls, for they are most dear to me, as they should know very well. So never content yourselves with just a little compliment or remembrance. I want letters!
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Don’t let them think they will disturb or annoy me. Rather let them write to their hearts’ content. This was the oral arrangement with Marie and Caroline—they made a promise of writing. I didn’t have the chance to speak about it to Pauline, so, I do so now and urge her to promise the same thing!

Regarding Francis and Elisa, they are too young—and so is Henry—to write a letter all by themselves. I beg them to write something in the letters of their papa. I will not forget them and will always love them!

I promise Elisa to pray for her and to offer the Holy Sacrifice once for her intention, that she may obtain the grace of overcoming her faults and may learn to love the good Lord greatly. As for Leo, if he is very good, I will bring him nice things when I return. But he must be obedient to his papa, his mamma, and must also listen to his little godmother and Caroline.

Adieu! May the peace of Our Lord be with you all!

22

No over-anxiety about temporal affairs. God will provide. Respect your children’s conscience.

Letter Twenty Two

La Neuville, October 15, 1841

J. M. J.

Dear Brother and Sister:

What graces Our Lord rains down on our family and He does it by means of the poorest of them all! How many
times I have had the happiness to offer the Holy Sacrifice before God's throne! You realize that very often I give you a "memento". Unite your intention with mine and offer yourselves together with the sacred Victim! Do not yield to anxiety or sorrow because it pleases Our Lord to make you wait so long for help in your temporal affairs; there is a set time for every thing. The Lord begins by overwhelming us with His spiritual goods which are infinitely more precious than the others.

[Do Not Be Too Anxious About Temporal Matters]

The temporal ones will come later if we are faithful. Consider well God's goodness toward us. You will have to be stronger and more advanced than you are in the life of faith and love of God and in detachment from the goods and honors of this world before He can give you more prosperity. At this time you would not yet be able to live under such conditions [of wealth]. It is possible that if He were to give it to you, several members of the family would lose their souls and then what benefit would you have reaped from God's goodness toward you?

Let the Lord arrange things for you, my dear friends. Divine Providence might direct your affairs more slowly than you would wish, but you will be more secure in regard to your salvation. I am fully convinced that, if the whole family were solidly established in the perfection of divine love and renunciation of the things of earth, your affairs would progress more quickly. Moreover, you see very well that God's goodness gives you reminders so that you will not distrust God. Do not offend God by distrust, therefore, but put all your confidence in Him; after all, if you sometimes suffer a small embarrassment, great good will always result from it for your sanctification.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANNN

I received a letter from Rennes and make you a gift of the five francs. I wrote to the Very Reverend Father Liebermann.

I am feeling better than I have ever felt and this has lasted throughout a very bad Autumn season.

[Respect Your Children's Conscience]

I beg you, dear brother, never to open the letters which I shall address to Pauline, Caroline and Marie, for they will usually contain something that pertains to their consciences, and it might sometimes embarrass them to know that you have read such things.

And as for you, my dear sister-in-law, I should like very much to have the opportunity of conversing with you, but there is no time for it. Let us pray God to grant us a few more happy moments like those we have had this year. I would like to say Mass once exclusively for your intention; tell me what day you would like me to do it.

A Dieu! Always belong totally and entirely to our Lord Jesus Christ and love Him alone: this is the most ardent desire of your poor brother,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANNN

P. S. Poor Alphonse\(^1\) will perhaps find salvation in his misfortune. This will humble him a little and bring him back from his false philosophy. As for Christopher, I cannot understand the idea that has gotten hold of him. I

---

\(^1\)Nathanael, brother of Francis Libermann, took the name of Alphonse in baptism. David, another brother took that of Marie, Joseph, Philomena, but went by the name of Christopher. He migrated to the United States, married and died there, after which his wife, Julie, returned to France. Alphonse likewise went to the United States and died in New Orleans around 1887. Both brothers once returned to France in 1839.
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

believe that God has blinded both of them to punish them. I have always told them that they would draw misfortune upon themselves by their unchristian conduct.

When I examine the ways of Divine Providence in our behalf, it seems to me that they would not have suffered those misfortunes if they had led a Christian life; they would have been more successful in their affairs. Try to speak to them in that vein and endeavor to bring them back to God!

23

The Devotion to Our Lady of Victories. Calumnies against the Director of the Shrine.

Letter Twenty Three

La Neuville, {October ?, 1841}

J. M. J.

Dear Brother:

I must add this short note to another which I sent you in my letter for the Vicar General.

[Defense of the Director of the Shrine]

I heard something a few days ago which has grieved me and, although it does not concern you, I think I should say something about it. A calumny is being spread in Germany against the venerable pastor of Our Lady of Victories [in Paris] and the work of the Archconfraternity. I am able to speak to you with certain knowledge about that excellent
priest and his holy work, for I have known him in a special way for a long time. He is a holy man and possesses great wisdom. All those who can be called bad priests in Paris have broken loose to attack him. He lets them talk and does not lift a finger or take one step to defend and justify himself. On the other hand, all those who are truly holy and wise have a great esteem for him. Such are the Sulpician Fathers who know him sufficiently to be able to pass judgment, and several respectable pastors of the capital.

There are others who, through jealousy or for other selfish reasons, willingly accept all the false rumors which the wicked spread against the pastor of Our Lady of Victories. Jealousy makes them say that this holy man established the Archconfraternity for the purpose of accumulating money. If all priests collected money as he does, what a blessing it would be for the poor!

[Rapid Spread of the Devotion]

I can assure you that there is no priest in Paris who is engaged in so many good works as that holy man. He gives a thousand, even ten thousand francs at one and the same time, when it is necessary. He has shown me letters sent him from all over the world which gave accounts of miracles that had been worked through the prayers of the Archconfraternity; and these are letters recently received. I have read many, and several miracles are of the first order: people who were desperately ill were cured suddenly; conversions which others considered impossible, were suddenly accomplished and the converts were unable to give an explanation of their change of heart; they were pursued and as it were impelled by some power, and they knew nothing about the prayers that were being said for them by the Archconfraternity. Moreover, there is the authority of the Church, the immense concourse of people who come in crowds to
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMAN

have their names registered. In Paris alone there are, I believe, over eighty-nine thousand men and more than two hundred thousand women enrolled in the Archconfraternity. The General of the Jesuits enrolled his entire Order, the General of the Capuchins similarly enrolled nineteen thousand religious, which is, I believe, all the members of his Order. Several other heads of Orders have done likewise. In Rome, one of the most prominent Fathers of the Society of Jesus is the director of the Archconfraternity that is established there.

In Naples, from the first days, ten thousand enrolled and sent their names to Our Lady of Victories.

The Archconfraternity is being established in all parts of the world with extraordinary results. Several bishops have placed their dioceses under the protection of Our Lady of Victories and have in person come to the Shrine in Paris either to ask for the enrollment or to thank Our Lady for graces received.

[Source of the Calumnies]

I wish only to give you the principal facts that come spontaneously to my mind. I am sure of what I say: God does extraordinary things for that work! What I am telling you should suffice to make us feel confident; after that should we give credence to some poor priest who proclaims that all this is pure fable? Such a man is a miserable calumniator and he will earn a terrible punishment if he does not change his mind and make reparation for the harm he has done. That priest knows the truth; he certainly speaks against his conscience, for he knows how many letters have been sent to the venerable pastor and he knows the many circumstances which prove conclusively the falsity of his accusations. Moreover he knows his benefactor, the venerable Father Desgenettes sufficiently well.
I tell you in all sincerity that that man is a hell-hound. His attack is rather against the most Holy Virgin than against the good pastor and this will not remain unpunished. The evil he has caused is only temporary; sooner or later truth will triumph, as it has already in Paris; for here several prominent men who had become prejudiced on account of the hypocritical criticisms of certain priests and had fallen out with Father Desgenettes, have since been converted from their errors. Among these are two of the most renowned preachers who now fervently preach that devotion.

I have given you all those details because I assumed that the calumnies had reached your ears. I also believe that, since you have dealings with a number of priests, you will have the opportunity to destroy those calumnies in the minds of several of them.

Adieu, dear brother.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

Father Francis Libermann
Dear Sister-in-Law:

I have finally decided to write you a letter in German! I have long owed you a reply to your two letters but I hope you will forgive me for my negligence. To make doubly sure that I will be forgiven, I have chosen to write to you in German.

It is not because I have forgotten you that I have waited so long to reply. I remember you always, particularly during Holy Mass. I think you like this better than receiving one or even two letters. What a pity that we live so far apart! I often wish I could spend a few hours in Strasbourg—if only I could see you at least every three months—but the good Lord has not desired it, and we must be pleased even when His will is contrary to ours. It would be most pleasant if we could live together like that, but we are not on this earth to enjoy ourselves. We live here to bear with patience and in a holy manner the tribulations of this life and draw from them what will benefit us for a holy and blessed eternity. How blessed that eternal life will be! It does not matter then whether we have been happy or unhappy in this world which is so full of misery, frivolity and sadness.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

[The Vanity of Earthly Goods]

How miserable are those who seek their happiness and satisfaction in this poor world! And how little it matters whether they enjoy happiness or not, for their short moment of life on earth will soon come to an end and, after that, there is either Heaven or Hell.

My dear sister, let the world do what it pleases. Never seek your contentment or satisfaction in this world. Wait a little longer; your hour will come and the good Master will reward you magnificently.

Consider the folly of those who esteem honors, pleasures, and riches, and who eagerly seek such things. They resemble poor unfortunates who are on the point of dying of hunger, thirst, and wretchedness. If such persons dream during the night that they have found a great treasure, that they are magnificently dressed, are seated at a sumptuous table where they can eat and drink to their heart’s content, that dream soon passes away. They wake up starved and more miserable than before. So is it, my dear sister, with those who love the world; they are in a dream; they think they are happy but they are not. Wait a little longer and all those people will wake up in eternity. Then they will realize their wretchedness, but they will no longer be able to change anything of their condition. The dream will be gone, their unhappiness eternal and without remedy. That is why you should consider yourself happy to belong to the good Lord. Do not love honors, pleasures, riches, worldly pomp; get hold of true happiness that lasts eternally and put aside the false happiness of the world that is but a dream. Love nothing but eternal happiness.
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMAN

So much for this time. I am astonished that I still remember so much German! Pray to the Blessed Virgin for me. I also will not forget you. Adieu.

Your brother,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN

Dear Brother:

I want to use the blank space on this paper to reply briefly to your last letter. Mr. Drach wrote to me; I believe that he will become librarian in Versailles.

I am glad that the things I had been told regarding the Archconfraternity were not as bad as had been reported. I received information from a trustworthy man and do not know who it was who spread the false news in Alsace.

I hope that Marie will remain devout. It is certain that she will be successful regarding all the rest; I believe that her character will be properly formed. It gives me pleasure to learn that she is a little more at ease and content in the house of her godmother. I worried somewhat about that and was afraid that the situation might exercise a bad influence on her character. I will pray Our Lord with all my heart for you and your beloved family. The good Lord will take care of it, I feel certain of it.

We need not fear that Felix is displeased because I refused to grant his request. His wife knows nothing about it. If he does not write, it is solely through laziness. He finds it very hard to write a letter; that is why he prefers doing nothing; it is shorter! I don’t receive any news about our poor relatives in America. It is as if I were a complete stranger to them.

My health has been very good since I received your letters. Your pills have helped me—at least, I believe so.
have any more. Toward the end, I took two at a time, that is six per day. Was this wrong? If I had any more I would take them. I had no attacks of colic this winter and I think I have got rid of them for good. My attacks of migraine have diminished; I have had them only when I had a cold in the head. It would be difficult for me to send you Lives of the Saints now, but I may find it possible at a later date.

Father Le Vavasseur has left for the island of Bourbon. There are still five here. Ten days ago a priest from Amiens came to join us unexpectedly. The Prefect Apostolic of Bourbon is receiving us with open arms. I did not see him myself but I asked Father Le Vavasseur to speak to him in my stead, for he knows him. I cannot afford to leave this place to go and see him, for I am all alone [in charge of the house].

I beg you to thank the Very Reverend Father Liebermann for the nice letter which he so kindly wrote to me. Give him an account of all that I have told you about the work for the Negroes.

All good wishes in the charity of Jesus and Mary.

Your brother and friend,

Father Francis Liebermann
Dear Brother:

I am quite late and am almost ashamed of replying to a letter of May 13th on July 4th, but better late than never!

I have nothing new to tell you about myself. My health is all right, or almost so. I have had difficulty in regaining my strength after that attack of diarrhea and a touch of dysentery which I suffered at the end of Lent. . . . Things have improved since I started to take wine at table instead of beer. I believe that a nervous condition is the principal source of the trouble. For the rest my health is good. I suffer migraine now and then. . . . I have a poor body; I must drag it along until the end; when that day comes the good Lord will know what to do with it!

I am not surprised at the reception Father Zanser gave to my letter which Father Liebermann showed him. It was not my intention at all that my letter should be shown at the Seminary. I wrote one sentence thoughtlessly and without any special end in view and behold the Vicar General [Fr. Liebermann] has taken it literally!

I wrote to Father Mühe some time ago but not exactly for the purpose of getting collaborators, for I believe, as you do, that it will be difficult to find helpers. If I want to get such help, I will have to visit the country personally.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

[The Conversion of Theodore Ratisbonne]

The conversion of young Mr. Ratisbonne is both certain and solid. What he says about his vision is very much in line with all the rules and all that happens ordinarily when extraordinary graces are given. The effects which that grace has produced in him make it quite certain that it was real. That good man was completely changed; he has truly become a new man. The thing which shows that change most particularly is his simplicity, his distrust of self, and the true humility that shows itself in his conduct. We know what characterizes a rich and irreligious Jew: simplicity, humility, and distrust of self are not his dominant virtues!

Mr. Ratisbonne would not have been successful in feigning the possession of those virtues, for of himself he would not have had even the slightest notion of them. Only God's grace could have given them to him by infusion, and this is what usually happens in the case of such extraordinary graces. It was not through vanity that he wrote his own story but it was precisely that simplicity that prompted him to do so. Several respectable priests had asked him to write an account, and he complied in a spirit of docility although the task was repugnant to him. He was obliged to submit his notes to three persons for their correction, so that there would not be anything in them that was not consistent with his humble spirit. So we must not accuse him; he has merely allowed himself to be led like a child.

[The Dangers to Which He Was Exposed]

That simplicity and that docility even exposed him to very great dangers. The whole Borough of Saint Germain wanted to see him; and at first he allowed himself to be led like a little child, although he was disgusted with being
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

thus confronted with the world; but after a very short while he took notice and withdrew. I obtained all these details from a good priest with whom I have often corresponded on that subject, for I was afraid of all the things people were asking him to do.

I know what it is to be a young convert from Judaism and how deeply vanity is rooted in the heart of such a person. I feared that that good young man might lose a great part of the fruits of the grace that had been given to him. I took steps to see him and open his eyes. Unfortunately the one whom I sent as intermediary did not use the right approach and I suspect that those who surrounded him must have thought that I wanted to draw him into our own little society, although this thought never entered my mind. Because of that, I felt obliged to abandon the idea of visiting him.

But the Blessed Virgin did not need me to safeguard a soul that had been given to her by her Son. Mr. Ratisbonne remained in the world only against his own wishes. From the first moment of his conversion he thought of leaving the world in order to withdraw into a religious order. If he remained for a while in the world it was because he wanted to plan his decision. He had first thought of the Jesuits, but he did not wish to proceed too quickly in a matter of such importance; he wanted to be sure about God's will. He has finally obtained that assurance. He left eight or fifteen days ago for Toulouse where he is making his novitiate with the Jesuit Fathers. I was notified three weeks before his departure and it was a cause of great consolation for me. Here then is a good soul that is secure. The thing that retained him in the world was no difficulty at all.

Those extraordinary graces are not granted to people because they had merited them. No man ever merited such a
grace, especially the grace of conversion. It does not flow from any preceding merit. It even happens most frequently that those extraordinary graces are given to those who were full of malice. When God has merciful designs on a soul, He makes use of the means which, in His wisdom, He knows will manifest the greatness and extent of His mercy. Now, extraordinary means are required when He has to influence persons who are corrupt or malicious. We have several outstanding examples of it: there is the case of Saint Paul who was struck by grace at the very time when his furious zeal and malice aimed to destroy religion in Damascus. One does not merit such a grace! Although Saint Paul was then ignorant to some extent, it is certain that his pharisaic fury was inspired by the devil and was a horrible wickedness, and his ignorance was not an excuse. Otherwise we should have to excuse all tyrants, for they also almost always invoke a good motive. We have also the example of Saint Augustine who had been corrupted to the very marrow of his bones and was filled with pride.

[Family News]

Congratulations to Francis [his nephew] for his success [in his studies] this year! Let him continue with courage. He will be successful in spite of difficulties. But if he wants to be a priest some day, let him do his best to remain pure and avoid bad company. Otherwise, everything will go wrong and his very future will be endangered.

Henry will soon be full of glory when he returns from the commencement carrying a basketful of prizes. Mama will have to send Clerc with a large basket to help him carry them all.

I wanted to add a word for my dear sister-in-law, but there is no more space. I shall not forget her in the presence
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMAN

of the good Lord and, at the altar, will remember the intentions she has recommended to me.

Adieu! Your most devoted brother,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN

P. S. A seminarian of Strasbourg is coming to Paris after the Feast of the Assumption, probably toward the end of August. You may give him some things for me, for he will pay you a visit. I ask you to give him a small package of bilberry seeds and another of cabbage seeds. We have a nice garden and the bilberries will be appreciated in the spring at a time when there is little fruit. If the berries need shade, we shall sow them in a little wood we have in our garden. Please tell me how we must sow and cultivate them. The seminarian’s name is Schwindenhammer. If you find some other useful plants, please, send them also through him—especially if you have spring plants.

26

New Year’s wishes. Prudence in fraternal correction.

Letter Twenty Six  January 5, 1843  Vol. 4, p. 66

J. M. J.

Dear Brother:

It’s a long time since I wrote to you, so I must take the occasion of the season to send you these few words although I am very busy at this moment. I have prayed for you with all my heart at the holy altar on the first day of the year, and I hope that Our Lord will grant you His divine grace in abundance and will put you in a more favorable position
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

for your own salvation and that of your whole beloved family. . . .

I often visit Felix [and his family]. They are well, but work on Sundays and Holydays. Poor Felix is responsible for it and his wife is sad on that account. . . . I have not said anything, because it would not have helped at the beginning of the new year; he has so much work, the workmen like to earn money on Sundays and Felix hasn’t the courage to contradict them, under the pretext probably that he would risk losing his best workers. I will write to him when the rush is over. . . .

And you, my dear sister-in-law—I must offer you my best wishes for the new year. I have thought of you in a special way at the holy altar, in order that Our Lord might sanctify you this year and grant you His grace of fortitude to enable you to bear the contradictions that are inseparable from the life of a mother of a family, to resist the spirit of the world which is so dangerous for us and so opposed to the spirit of Our Lord Jesus.

Please tell all your beloved children, who are all so very dear to me in Our Lord, that I do not forget them for one instant, not only all together, but each one in particular. I would have liked to write to all, especially to the older ones, who know how dear their souls are to me in the charity of Our Lord, but I have too much work at this moment, and cannot find the time to do it. They will excuse me, I hope, this time. In compensation for this neglect, I will pray more to obtain the graces they desire and need. . . .

Adieu, dear brother. May the peace of Our Lord be in your soul.

Your brother and friend,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN

110
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMAN

27

Your temporal troubles are for your sanctification. Caroline's vocation to convent life.

Letter Twenty Seven

La Neuville, February 2, 1843

J. M. J.

Dear Brother:

Seeing you in pain and sorrow, I would have liked to reply without delay to your last letter. On the other hand I wanted to wait until I had fulfilled all your commissions. And so I have left the task of re-establishing peace in your soul to Our Lord and our Blessed Lady.

[God Sanctifies You Through Temporal Troubles]

I feel certain that Our Lord wants you to suffer this trial to help you purify your soul of all that is still faulty in it. Abandon yourself and your whole family to God's guidance. Submit humbly to the hand of Our Lord. Do not seek to become insensitive at the sight of the discomfort of your family. It is quite certain that God does not disapprove when your heart suffers and feels sorrow; but submit to that pain and sorrow with docility and mildness. Carefully preserve mildness and meekness of heart, which are so easily lost amidst pains and sorrows.

When tribulation inclines you to discouragement or bitterness, to deep ennui, impatience, and similar sentiments, which are quite natural in such circumstances, raise your heart to God or Mary. With a humble heart make an act of submis-

111
sion and surrender to God's way for you and try to calm your inner self for love of Him. I assure you, dear brother, that if you do this it will be most useful for your sanctification.

It pleased Divine Goodness to make you triumph over so many other obstacles that stood in the way of your salvation. God will likewise make you victorious in your present temptation. But it is certain that if you bear well your present trial, as I have explained, you and your family will be sanctified by it.

I see God's design in all this. I am convinced that you will not remain long in your embarrassment. It is God's instrument for your sanctification. Once this merciful purpose is attained, earthly goods or at least comfortable circumstances will no longer be harmful to your family. But, without seeking to scrutinize God's designs, it is certain that those circumstances that are so painful to nature are most fortunate and useful according to the order of grace. Hence let the good Lord do what He pleases and abandon yourself fully to His guiding hands.

[Caroline's Religious Vocation]

I have done all I can for our good Caroline, but everything has gone wrong, contrary to my hopes.

In regard to the Sacred Heart Convent in Paris, the person who was best able to render service on that occasion told me that that convent is heavily in debt. She felt sure that the Superior would not grant our request [for free board and tuition]. The same thing happened elsewhere. I think I see in this the hand of Divine Providence. I have done what was in my power, but it belonged to Our Lord to bless my efforts if He wished it to be so. I took all those steps with the conviction that I was not acting against the will of our Divine Master; but at the same time I had a certain foreboding that I would be unsuccessful, for I cannot reconcile myself to the
idea that Caroline is made for the world. A beautiful soul like Caroline's—a soul so filled with good desires and graces—is made for greater things than to shine amidst worldly vanities. Moreover, her whole past and the way God has led her, show with sufficient clarity what I have always believed regarding her vocation.¹

She is at present in a state of effervescence. Disturbed by passions that feed her self-love, she feels a certain attraction for the world, but this does not render her soul less dear to God. And God’s merciful designs in her regard will certainly be fulfilled in due time.

I am patiently waiting for the blessed moment when grace will triumph in her. If she is faithful, she will, I think, go far in God’s service. She will, in the meantime, suffer all sorts of pain, boredom, even disappointment, at the sight of the world which flatters her self-love and which, at the same time, is unable to satisfy her heart.

I often think of this good child who is very dear to me, as you know well, and every time I think of her, the same thoughts come before me and I cannot think differently than what I have just told you. Let us pray and let us be humbly docile to the holy will of our Master.

Your brother and friend,

Father Francis Libermann

¹Caroline became a religious of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts, taking the name of Sister St. Agnes. She died at Dunkirk, Oct. 16, 1867.
Mission news. Divine Providence' protection of a negro slave. The troubles with Christopher.

Letter Twenty Eight

La Neuville, May 4, 1843

J. M. J.

Dear Brother:

[Mission News]

You ask me to give you news about our community. Things are about the same as they were when I last wrote you about them. We have to send five missionaries to Guinea. The voyage, however, has been postponed for a few months because we want them to arrive during the season that is best suited for the health of the missionaries. Five others will go to San Domingo where they will join a sixth one who is already there in accordance with the agreement with Bishop Rosati, Apostolic Delegate to the Island, but the revolution has once more caused a delay.

There are not even ten in our house now; some who are destined for San Domingo have not yet arrived. They will come for a few months since there is no hurry.

I have just now sent two missionaries to the island of Bourbon to join two others who are already there. Several applications for membership in our Society have been received. I hope that when our work is better known we shall have more applicants. Just as God wants! Thanks to God's
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMAN

mercy resources have not been wanting. This is about all that is worth telling about the conditions of our house.

[Divine Providence' Protection of a Negro Slave]

However, I want to tell you a story which will no doubt interest you, for it shows the workings of Divine Providence. It concerns a young Negro whom we have had with us for about eight days. This boy is about fifteen years old according to his own calculation. His father is the oldest son of the last king of Bambara in Africa. Bambara is in the interior, about three hundred leagues from the coast. Immediately after the death of his grandfather, his uncle seized the capital of that country and usurped the throne at the expense of the rights of the boy's father, for, in his country, when the king dies, the throne goes to the oldest brother of the deceased; if he has no surviving brother, the throne goes to his eldest son. Now, the last king had no surviving brother and so the throne should have gone to the boy's father since he was the eldest son; but his younger brother prevented it. So the boy's father went to war to take back the throne, but during his absence, the usurper entered the house, took away that poor boy together with his mother-in-law (that is, one of the ten wives of his father); he then sent them away to be sold and removed from the country. The poor child, who was only eight years old at the time, was thus sent to Saint-Louis in Senegal and sold to a Frenchman. He crossed part of the Sahara during a journey which lasted two months, after which he remained two years in Senegal. His master, who had to make a voyage to France, brought him with him. He is a gentleman from Caen, in Normandy. He remained there for a good while with this young Negro who was greatly liked by the mother of his master. However, no one thought of giving him instruction in the Christian religion. His mistress sent him to bring children of the family to the
church. The pastor of the parish, seeing often that young Negro who was a likable chap, inquired about his conduct and his status in regard to the Christian religion. Having found out that the child was not even baptized, he instructed him, baptized him and got him to make his First Holy Communion.

The poor little Negro was very docile: He learned the catechism perfectly and drew much profit from the instructions of the pastor, becoming very devout. But the time arrived when his master wanted to return to Saint-Louis and to take the little Negro with him. The poor child was very much upset about it; he was greatly devoted to his mistress and to the good pastor and now he would have to leave them! Moreover he fully realized how sad his situation in Saint-Louis of Senegal would be because he would not be able to fulfill his religious duties since slaves are woefully oppressed in that country. He revealed his sorrow to the pastor and the latter did his best to make the master change his mind and leave the boy in France. But the master, an impious and harsh man became angry with the pastor and wanted to take the child with him by force, saying that, as his master, he could do with the boy what he pleased.

The good pastor went to see the Superior of the Junior Seminary of Caen and explained to him the cause of his grief. The Superior told the pastor that he ought not to leave the child in the hands of such an impious man and he paid a visit to the Public Prosecutor to find out what means could be taken to prevent the master from taking the little Negro with him. The Procurator told him: "There are no slaves in France and therefore the master has no right to take the boy away by force."

Time was running out for the liberation of the boy from the clutches of his master since he was to leave that very
day by steamboat to join the vessel that would take him to Senegal. The good Lord intervened; something went wrong with the steamboat and their departure had to be postponed. The pastor, having reached an understanding with the superior of the Junior Seminary, prompted the child to ask his master's permission to say goodbye to the pastor. (They did not want to cause a commotion by seizing the boy by force.) The child thus came to the rectory where, upon his arrival, he was put in a carriage which brought him to the Junior Seminary and thus beyond the reach of his master.

The master departed, willy nilly, leaving the boy behind to enjoy his freedom. The child remained at the Seminary for two years, during which he began the study of Latin. The directors began to worry about him, for they did not know what to do with him, although his conduct was excellent. He was pious, regular, studious, mild, friendly, and docile. But once again the Good Lord came to his rescue. One of our Fathers, a man of very strong temperament and whose nerves were somewhat frayed, was not feeling well because of a long rest in solitude. I sent him on a pilgrimage to the Blessed Virgin in hope of a cure. The thought came to me to send him to Our Lady of Deliverande, in Normandy, a distance of three leagues from Caen, where there is a famous pilgrimage to Our Lady. I don't understand why that thought crossed my mind, for we are more than fifty leagues from that Shrine, and I recommended that he go on foot and visit the pastors as much as possible. He did as I had ordered.

During his journey he heard about the Superior of the Junior Seminary of Caen and was urged to seek lodging there. So he stayed there and the Superior, having heard him say that he was a missionary for the Negroes, told him about his Negro boy. Our confrere, upon his return,
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

told us about his adventure with the young Negro. It came just at the right time, for we had just made an agreement with Bishop Barron, Vicar Apostolic of Guinea, who had left La Neuville the previous day. I replied immediately to our confrere that the "boy was ours." He belongs to the Vicariate of Guinea since Bambara belongs to Guinea. So I wrote immediately to Bishop Barron who agreed with me that we should take the boy and instruct him in the ecclesiastical sciences.

Then I wrote to the Superior of the Junior Seminary who readily agreed. The boy is now with us. He is a strong lad and well-formed; he has a lively mind, is intelligent and clever. He learns with ease, has a good memory, has much common sense and an excellent character. He is, besides, full of faith and piety.

There is much here that we can hope for to the advantage of his country. If his uncle keeps the throne, it is probable that, after the latter's death, the boy's elder brother will be his successor, for such is the law of the land. After the death of the king, it is the brother or the son of the brother who succeeds to the throne. So, in any case, he will exercise a good influence when he returns to his own country, especially if he has learned the European sciences. He is tattooed—it is the characteristic mark of his family. He has three long and deep scars on his right cheek and two on his left cheek. These cuts are made with a razor when the children are still very small, this being the custom among the princely families of that country. . . .

[The Troubles with Christopher]

I am not surprised about what you tell me concerning [our brother] Christopher. This causes me great sorrow. I would like to help him but I really don't know how. To take him in as a Brother is entirely impossible. Superiors of communities
must not and may not put a burden on their Congregations. When I admit a Brother, I may not seek my own interest but only the interest of the work. It is certain that I will never accept a man like our poor Christopher, and if I may not accept a stranger, how could I accept my brother? I would be failing entirely in my duty [if I were to accept him]. Neither can I take him as a domestic servant; and he could not live with us; he has not enough faith nor devotion. Besides, he would do whatever comes into his head and would not follow the regulations of our house, and this would be a source of disorder in our community. Nevertheless, if he had come here, we would have had to do something for him, and would have tried to find him a means of livelihood. I don’t see how this could be done. How would he come [back from the U. S. A.]? It would require three hundred francs at least, without counting the accessories. I don’t know what to do. Besides, his wife is ill. He has asked me for money to take care of her. I am not permitted to use the funds which have been given me by devout persons for the support of the missions. I would have to render a very severe account to God for such a thing. It would, without any doubt, be stealing to the detriment of our mission.

Have confidence in God; He will take care of you. I pray with all my heart for [your son] Francis, that he may make a holy First Communion and that this great grace may dispose him for other favors. Nor will I forget his good mother and Pauline, Caroline and Marie, of whom I often think, as I do of the other dear children.

Entirely yours in the charity of Jesus and Mary,

Father Francis Libermann
Dear Brother and Sister:

I saw Father Ratisbonne yesterday—also Mrs. Stuhlen. Things are as I told you: Theodora must come to stay with this good lady who will take care of her; she seems to be very respectable and capable. I believe that Theodora will profit by staying with her. Marie was with her last year. You will not have any expenses for Theodora; Father Ratisbonne intends to pay the expenses of her journey to Paris.

[Mission News]

Our affairs regarding the missions are going well. Last September we sent seven priests and three brothers to the coast of Africa. They will be there at the expense of the Government which will give them fifteen hundred francs a year for each missionary, a house and chapel for each station and the necessaries for Catholic worship. The Government will even pay a pension from now on for the missionaries we provide. . . . In return we are asked for nothing but our ministry, the very same thing we would certainly have done if I had not made that agreement with the Government. Besides, we have complete freedom regarding the administration of our communities and the employment of the missionaries in the exercise of their sacred functions. All this is stated explicitly in the contract.
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

The intentions of the Minister of the Navy and of the Director of the Colonies seem excellent. They act with frankness. They have political views, and they do not hide this from us, but they want the benefits of religion, and I hope they will procure that good. All the principal precautions taken in my proposals were aimed against the obstructionism of lower officials. Everything was granted at my request without objection and difficulty. You see that the good Lord is blessing us, although we do not merit it in any way. I have not sought the help that has been offered and I did not even think about it; but Mary is watching over us and Divine Providence, because of the prayers of this good Mother, takes care of our affairs.

[Obstacles to Vocations]

We have now six novice-priests and expect three brothers. Once our little work is better known, I trust that Our Lord will send us more. If we have the men, we will take care of the whole of West Africa and also Madagascar, which has been offered to us by the Ministry. Great is the harvest but the laborers are few. When the Lord of the vineyard desires our labors He will send us laborers.

You see, my dear brother, that I am trying to satisfy you as much as possible, because of the interest you have in all of us. But you on your part must pray for us, for, as you see, the difficulties are very great and the good to be done is immense. The field is vast but there are so few hands for the work.

Men, even godly men, want to be prudent—so much so that for a while they will be afraid of sending us candidates. Sometimes their reasons will be very weak. Meanwhile souls remain in wretchedness and blindness! We must wait patiently, with a humble and submissive heart, until it shall please the Lord to destroy the hesitating “prudence” of His
faithful servants, and to prevent them from making judgments which are harmful to those poor countries that are still seated in the shadow of death. They are well disposed but run the danger of falling into the hands of the Protestants.

[God Alone is Our Hope]

God alone is our hope and our joy! Hence it would be very wicked on my part not to trust in Him alone, for He has done so much for us without the help of any man and almost without our making any move.

Human prudence has done a bit of harm from time to time, but the hand of God has repaired everything in order that we might not pride ourselves upon anything but put our confidence in Him alone.

This is why I am fully resolved never to put myself forward. I will remain hidden as long as God desires it. Nevertheless, the work will soon be known and publicized in France. All as God wants!

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

30

Christopher again. Trust in God’s Providence regarding your children.

Letter Thirty April 2, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 155

Dear Brother:

[Christopher Again]

I feel uncomfortable about [our brother] Christopher. I wish with all my heart that I could help him, but what can I do? Find him a job? I cannot think of any. To make him
a porter, a handyman—in a convent? But there are no jobs like that in convents. Moreover, I cannot burden a convent with a man who would be useless and would even create additional burdens; they would either not keep him or they would be embarrassed in having him. I grieve, I bewail his situation, but there is really nothing that I can do about it. The money I have cannot be used for his benefit, for it was not given for that purpose. Moreover, I can assure you, dear brother, that I myself am in straights. Our numbers have been increasing during the last six months; we have now seventeen or eighteen to take care of. If Christopher were in France, he would surely establish himself here and I would do my best to do something for him. But where would I get the money to pay for his transatlantic voyage?

[Trust in God’s Providence Regarding Your Children]

Don’t torment yourself about your position; you will live in straitened circumstances for a while, but I feel sure that the future will give you days of serenity. Your children will not be as unhappy as you imagine. Pauline will enter the convent—this seems evident to me. She is inclined to procrastination, for her disposition is unclear to her; she does not dare make a decision, but a decision some day will come suddenly. Caroline will succeed perfectly; she will be an accomplished person. When she leaves Louvencourt [convent school], she will be brilliant anywhere, especially if she gets a first class diploma. Marie is safe. Next we have Elisa who will get her education. If she does as well as Caroline, which I expect, knowing her good mind and her piety, she will very easily find the means to support herself. Then there remains the boys: Francis will go to the Seminary. Time will tell what the two others will do. Leave all that into the hands of Our Lord. We rack our brains uselessly; Divine Providence has care of us and of everything that concerns us.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

If at times you happen to be sad and "all in," it is due to your temperament. You must bear all with patience, humility and for the love of God. These are no doubt sudden passing squalls which may recur from time to time. You should submit to such hard crosses for the love of God and do all you can to distract and console yourself. Avoid yielding to practical discouragement, which consists in neglecting your duties of piety. At such times you will pray without any taste for it—no matter! You must pray in spite of everything and continue to perform your pious exercises and good works. There is nothing evil in such a condition as long as you do not wilfully entertain such thoughts. Our Lord has been willing to experience such things in the Garden of Olives and even on the Cross. However, He did not fail to pray for a long time but said: "Not My will but Thine be done!" He willingly bore His Cross and finished the work His heavenly Father had given Him to do; you must act likewise.

I would like to get a letter from our dear Pauline. . . . No news from Guinea! Our missionaries have not yet reached their destination. . . . With regard to Christopher—I don't think that being in Europe would be more useful to his soul than being in America. I am afraid that his faith is very weak. He was very reasonable before his departure when, it is true, he was still a recent convert. Let us pray, if it be God's will, that he return and I shall do all I can, but it is difficult to help him.

Entirely your in Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN

Best and most affectionate regards to my dear sister-in-law and all her children. I will remember Theodora on the day of her first Holy Communion; and I have not forgotten Marie and Pauline.
Dear Brother:

Your letter of the eighteenth of this month arrived the very day I met Father Ratisbonne. I saw him at Louvencourt [convent school] where he wanted to pay a visit to Caroline and, of course, it was taken for granted that he would, on that occasion, address a few edifying words to the pupils who had been assembled in the chapel.

Miss Poirson had just arrived on the same day. Valerie's sister had not been able to come with her to Amiens because there was no room in the stagecoach. Miss Poirson had written to Mother Superior to tell her she was coming but she had posted the letter too late and it arrived only after this young person herself had come. As a crowning misfortune, Mother Superior was absent. This put Caroline in an extremely embarrassing position, but I quickly freed her and her friend from their trouble by talking to the Assistant who has charge of visitors.

The young newcomer was given a day or two of rest and Caroline acted as her "guardian angel"; she did not leave her throughout the first day. Please, assure Mrs. Poirson that her daughter will not be neglected; the charity of Caroline will take care of that.

[The Value of Crosses]

And now about your own affairs. You are very wrong in entertaining all those worrisome thoughts. I am quite sure
that God will not fail you. You will have moments of distress, but your situation will improve from day to day and you will live comfortably in the end. You will then appreciate your past sufferings which were destined to try you and perfect you in the way of God.

Be very faithful to all that God in His goodness gives you to help you. I regard those pains and troubles as so many treasures of grace which have enabled you to get rid of serious defects. You might never have freed yourself of them if you had lived prosperously or even if you had merely been able to live in peace.

After you are freed from those pains, you will see quite clearly that Divine Mercy was really doing you a favor at the time. You will also see that God will help you, but this will be done gradually and in a way that will be hardly discernible, in order that you may not lose the fruit of all those heavy crosses. How great is His goodness and love for us!

I don't worry about your temptations to discouragement. They spring from your temperament. I don't believe that you are guilty at all, for the will does not consent to those things. You experience those sentiments in spite of yourself and they are part of your cross; they greatly increase your pains but great good will result from them. Be courageous and generous. Give yourself entirely to the Divine Savior and carry your cross with love and humility. You will not be wanting in perseverance, of this I feel certain, and this is a great consolation for me. I am convinced that your embarrassment will not last much longer and I greatly rejoice at that thought, for I have the well-being of your family at heart. This conviction has always been with me and it is stronger than ever.
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMAN

[Theodora's First Holy Communion]

In regard to dear Theodora, she is quiet. The good Lord will provide for her education.

Father Ratisbonne is not able to take her in at this moment, unless he puts her with his convert classes, which he does not want to do. We have now reached an important stage and, if our plan succeeds, there will be no more difficulties for Theodora. Father Ratisbonne said that on the day of her First Communion “she looked like a monstrance and was garlanded like a repository. She was immobile out of fear that she might lose a little of the sweetness of the graces of her First Communion.” These are his own expressions. This shows that he was very observant and sought to know what sort of a person she was. In general, his affection for our entire family—particularly for Theodora—seems sincere. He has a work to accomplish, namely, that of his convert classes, and is not free to do as he pleases. He will probably buy a large house and I think that our plans will then be realized without difficulty. Moreover, if this does not materialize, Theodora will be here before the end of next year.

Regarding Pauline, I think your advice is good. I feel sure that I shall have no difficulty in finding a suitable house for her. . . . The Sacred Heart Convent would be ready to receive her, but I don’t think it is suitable for her. And I don’t want to embarrass the Sisters of Louvencour Convent.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN

1Her name at baptism was Marie-Elizabeth Libermann. This daughter of Dr. Samson Libermann adopted the name of Theodora in 1838, when she was seven years old, in honor of Father Theodore Ratisbonne, the Jewish convert.
P.S. My best regards to the entire family, especially to my dear sister-in-law, of whom we speak very often, in particular with Father Ratisbonne whenever he comes to Amiens.

32

Report on Pauline’s entrance into the convent.

Letter Thirty Two  

Amiens, September 17, 1844

Dear Brother:

I can’t allow my sister-in-law to leave without giving her a short note for you. I was not able to do this while she was here, so I do it now and will send this letter to Paris.

I shall not give you a detailed account of what took place during the four or five days which your wife spent with us. I made her lodge with friends; they are good and very simple people who offered her a lodging and I did not want to refuse their offer. Their oldest son is the chaplain of Louven-court convent and thus also the confessor of Pauline. It was as much out of friendship for Caroline as for my sake that this excellent priest wanted your wife to stay with his parents.

[A Mother’s Farewell to Her Daughter]

I have admired the courage which your wife showed throughout the time she was in Amiens. I saw her cry only three times and then but for a few moments. The rest of the time she was gay and satisfied. She was always docile to God’s will and never regretted the sacrifice she was offer-
ing to Our Lord. She outdid herself at the moment of separation—she was truly heroic! She and Pauline embraced with great love and manifest joy, but they did not shed one tear. I brought your wife back to her lodging and she remained jolly and contented throughout. I left her in that disposition. The thing that contributed to her calm and contentment was that she understood Pauline’s happiness in being able to consecrate herself in so good a community. Another contributing cause for the contentment of both mother and daughter was the beautiful character of Mother Superior and the kindness and tender affection which she showed Pauline.

[Joy of Sister Pauline]

Now a word about Pauline. She is an angel. From the moment she entered the house and received the black habit and the veil, she was in continual joy. She did not think of crying or of being of homesick. She is already at her ease and as much at home as a fish in the water.

She entered Saturday, and in the evening began a very earnest retreat. She spent the whole time in great contentment and peace. I saw her Wednesday, that is yesterday and she was very pleased. All the novices and postulants keep their eyes on her and are edified by her modesty. They say that it is easy to put oneself in the presence of God when Sister Pauline is near!

Silence is observed throughout the whole retreat; there are recreations, but they are taken in silence. When talking is allowed during recreations, she will be even more pleasing to others. Her conversation is sweet, modest, simple, and gay. It is this kind that is best for religious and such are the qualities that their recreations ought to have.

So you see that our little Sister Pauline is really made for the religious life and especially for that of Louvencourt. The
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

retreat is austere as you can realize. In the course of the year she will have a variety of occupations, which will prevent her from becoming too tense, and she will have two recreations each day; it will be a great consolation to her. She will be satisfied with life in the convent and will find rest and happiness there, but above all she will find there the means to sanctify herself.

It seems that you expect to come and assist at the clothing of Pauline. Your room will be ready; we are building it at present. You will stay with us.

In the meantime, I am, in the charity of Jesus and Mary,

Yours sincerely,

FRANCIS LIBERMAN,  
Priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

33

Pauline is happy in the convent. Don't worry about Caroline.  
Sundry requests and remarks.

Letter Thirty Three October 6, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 368

Dear Brother and Sister:

I write this letter alone, because I am in a hurry to have it reach you; nevertheless, I shall send it to Pauline and Caroline; perhaps they will find time to add a word; but on the condition that they will mail it today; hence don't be surprised if they don't add anything.

[About Pauline and Caroline]

I saw Pauline this morning; good little Sister Pauline is astonishingly happy. She feels at home. She suffered from
homesickness for two days at the end of her retreat, but all this is gone now. Mother Superior told me today that Sister Pauline is doing very well and that she is loved by everybody, particularly because of her child-like simplicity. She is always kind and so jolly that it is a pleasure to see her. I see they are very pleased with her at Louvencourt. Moreover, she is very open with her Superior; she tells her everything that is on her mind—this is a great quality in a religious, especially in a novice; it is this that forms good religious, makes them happy in the communities and wins for them the esteem and affection of their superiors.

Don't worry about Caroline. While her mother was here, she was a little beside herself; it was joy that made her sad: this is literally true! She was wholly beside herself the first day. When she starts studying again, she will soon recover. Besides, she is rather grave and earnest during the course of the year. I told Mother Superior that Caroline's mother found her sad. Caroline said it was nothing, that she also had had moments during the year when she was more serious, but that it was not sadness. I believe, however, that Caroline is a little inclined to these varying moods. Such changes are often caused by motives of which she is not aware and which exist nevertheless; thus, when her mother came, she was a little embarrassed because she was staying with those good people who offered so kindly to give her lodging. The reason might have been a bit of self-love which made her fear I-know-not-what and probably she herself did not know the object of her fears, for she was never able to explain what disturbed her. Beside this, she is a little embarrassed with her confessor. She is not ordinarily embarrassed with him, but she was rather often with him, often met him and spoke with him, saw him, etc., etc. How can we tell what is passing through the heads of young people? This is always the way with
girls while they are in boarding school. One thing I can
tell you for certain: she is very pleased, and Mother Su-
perior of Louvencourt constantly speaks of her to me with
great praise and is very interested in her. She has won
the esteem and affection of everybody in Louvencourt.

[Sundry Requests and Remarks]
I have made inquiries in behalf of our young [brother]
Samuel but have not found anything until now. It would
not be right to take him into our house and the Royal
College is too far away.

Now for a few things I would like you to do for me.
The first is very urgent. We need several copies of the
Theology of Father Liebermann. I wrote to Paris for
them and was told they are out of print. I think there
must still be copies in Strasbourg.

Secondly, there are some more "substantial" things re-
garding edibles with which I dare to bother you: two
hundred pounds of prunes, hundred and fifty pounds of
Schnitz; one barrel of Sauerkraut. I don't want millet
this year; the French don't like it.

Our missionary has not yet left for Rome; he will leave
at the end of this month and will be accompanied by Father
Schwindenhammer.

Adieu, my dear friends. There are many other things
I would like to tell you, but I have to preach our retreat
this week and this absorbs all my time. I will write you
about our affairs in my next letter.

I trust that my dear sister-in-law took with her good
memories of Picardy; she on her part has left good im-
pressions; we shall have the pleasure henceforth of seeing
her from time to time.

Kindest regards to dear Marie. Everybody abandons
her, but my spirit and my heart do not! Who knows whether
some day we shall not have the happiness of seeing her here? Poor Theodora! I shall not say anything now, for we shall soon have the opportunity of talking together.

Dear Francis wants me to give him a rule. He will say that I am very negligent, but I trust that my sloth will not prevent him from loving the good Lord with all his heart and behaving in a saintly manner.

One more word for Henry and Leo. My fondest regards to them. I hope that they will console their mamma for the departure of Pauline by their kindness, obedience and good conduct.

 Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

Father Francis Libermann

34

A cure attributed to Our Lady of Victory. Prudence in dealing with the miraculous. Pauline’s happiness. The purpose of miracles. God loves those who are in sorrow and trouble.

Letter Thirty Four  November, 1844  Vol. 6, p. 440

Dear Brother:

I want to give you an account of a miracle which took place two weeks ago in the Orphanage of Louvencourt. My sister-in-law will be happy to read the story, for she saw the patient several times and had great compassion for her.

I did not have time to give you a full account at the time I wrote to you about it but want to do it now. [Here is a copy of the letter I sent to Father Desgenettes, pastor of Our Lady of Victories in Paris:]¹

¹November 1, 1844 (vol. 6, p. 401)
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

[Report on a Miraculous Cure]

Very Reverend and Dear Father:

I want to recount to you an event that gives great glory to our good Mother Mary. It took place eight days ago in the Orphanage of this city [Amiens]. One of the girls of that house, aged twenty-one, fell from a window of the second floor, struck the bar of a window on the ground floor and from there fell to the edge of that window. She was found unconscious in the adjoining room. She was put to bed and the doctor was called. He examined her and found that several parts of her body had suffered injury. The most dangerous was a fracture of a bone in the spine. The membrane surrounding the medulla became inflamed and the girl was in mortal danger. She made a novena to the Blessed Virgin in which all joined and I recommended her to the prayers of the Archconfraternity [of Our Lady of Victories]. There was a marked improvement at the end of the novena, during which she had carried a relic taken from the robe of the Blessed Virgin. The physician had some hope for the girl’s recovery, but he felt certain that she would remain incapacitated for the rest of her life.

The hope did not last long. Her condition worsened progressively, the medulla became more and more inflamed and she suffered unbearable pains in the loins. She was unable to move and suffered particularly when the linen had to be changed and she had to be carried from one bed to another. She cried out in a tone that brought tears to our eyes: “O my God, come and take me! O my Mother, my Mother, help me!” She remained in this condition for about six weeks; her legs were paralyzed and the doctor lost all hope for her recovery. I then recommended her once more to the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Victories.
During the night of the eighth, the symptoms became ever more alarming. There were crises and frightful convulsions, accompanied by horrible pains which the doctor was unable to understand. She felt pains in the heart and in the intestines which made her cry so loudly that she was heard throughout the house and even in the street. Thinking that death was near the doctor advised the Superior to have the last sacraments administered to her.

The poor child had always lived a life that was most pure and innocent and she prepared herself for death with admirable dispositions. On the 19th I gave her Extreme and Holy Viaticum. From that moment she thought only of death and was glad at the prospect of leaving her bed of pain and seeing the good Lord. But there was still one wish which she frequently expressed namely that of dying as a Child of Mary. She asked the Superior once more to give her that consolation and the favor was granted; she was received that very day into the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin which is established in the Orphanage. The poor girl was full of joy because she would be able to die adorned with so many graces and as a Child of Mary.

The crises became more and more violent. It took three persons to hold her and her pains in the chest and the intestines were unbearable. They were accompanied by spasms that almost choked her and convulsions, followed by fainting spells that lasted from eight to ten minutes.

During the night that followed upon that day of graces, toward half past seven in the evening, she suffered a violent crisis and then fell into a state that was believed to be her death agony. The Sisters gathered around her and recited the prayers of the dying for her soul. First they saw her fall into extreme weakness and then she suddenly extended her arms in the form of a cross, raised her eyes to Heaven and remained in that position for about three quar-
ters of an hour. She seemed to gaze steadily at some object. Her face was angelic and was an image of a soul in contemplation.

When she recovered consciousness her first movement was that of joining her hands and she remained for about a quarter of an hour in deep recollection. Being questioned by the bystanders she said in a voice full of conviction: "Oh my Mother, how far away I have been! How beautiful!" The Sisters thought she was delirious and they told her that she had not left her bed. She replied with the same words: "Oh my Mother, how far away I have been! How beautiful it was!" And she added: "It is in my mind that I have seen things. I will be cured eight days from tomorrow, on Saturday, the day of the Blessed Virgin."

It was impossible to obtain a fuller explanation from her at that time. However, she said also that she would have two more similar visions and this actually occurred. She had a second vision at one o'clock that same night; it lasted for a quarter of an hour. It was after this second vision that she told me the story of all that had taken place.

I visited the Orphanage the following day. Mother Superior quickly told me about the extraordinary things that had taken place during the night. I went to see the poor sufferer and she told me that she had gone far away during the night, that it was very beautiful, that she had seen a great light in which she had gazed upon Jesus and Mary, that Mary was dressed in white; that Jesus and Mary were so beautiful, she had never seen anything like that, and that she was so happy at that moment that she would have liked to die; that Jesus and Mary had replied: "No, my child, you will not die. You will be cured next Saturday." They added that she would have much to suffer but that it would be for the good of the Orphanage.
They told her to be very obedient and after that Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin rose sweetly in the air and disappeared from her eyes.

The girl told me that she had not seen this with the eyes of her body but with her mind. She was unable to explain more fully, for she is a very simple sort of child and is not accustomed to spiritual things. I did not want to question her for fear of arousing her imagination. She added: "Father, it is certain that I will be cured next Saturday. My legs will still be weak but I shall walk and go to the Chapel. I have still to suffer much before I am cured. I shall be at my 'last gasp' but I will be cured. It is for the Orphanage that I shall suffer."

The girl is so simple that she told the story of the favors Our Lord had granted her to anyone who wished to hear about them. I ordered her not to do it any more. I also made arrangements with the Sisters of the Orphanage and asked them never to speak about her vision or to seem to attach any importance to it, for I wanted to prevent harm to this soul that is so simple and so ignorant of the things of God. From that time on she always appeared to be in the most peaceful recollection and free from any excitement. She remained in this disposition an entire week, even during the most intense sufferings.

The illness, however, far from diminishing, became more and more serious. The crises and convulsions became more frequent and prolonged. Sometimes she had as many as twenty crises in twenty-four hours. That is why the doctor had lost all hope for her recovery even at the beginning of the week. The poor girl knew her condition perfectly well. She knew what the doctor thought about it and yet she spoke about her cure as certain. She no longer spoke about dying and during her severe pains no longer said, "My God, come and take me" as she had done before. On the contrary, she spoke about the preparations to be made.
at the time she would get up during the night between Friday and Saturday and go to the Chapel to give thanks to Jesus and Mary.

One day when she was very ill she told me in her naive way: "The doctor wants to put me into a hole but the Blessed Virgin will cure me next Saturday." On the Thursday she asked me to come and hear her confession in the evening of the following Friday because she wanted to go to communion the following Saturday in thanksgiving for her cure. On Friday evening she begged her superiors to prepare her clothes, put them on her bed, so that she might be able to go to the Chapel as soon as she was cured. Seeing that they seemed to pay little attention to her request, she said: "You will see, Mother, that nothing will be ready and I shall be late!" The Sisters finally felt obliged to acquiesce to her wishes. She expressed her assurance about her cure without excitement or astonishment. She spoke quietly like a person talking about things of which she is sure.

She preserved great peace and gaiety that entire week in the midst of all her pains. Immediately after suffering a most severe convulsion she said smiling: "That's another one that is gone!" It would have been difficult for any one coming then into the room to believe that she had just suffered such tortures. It was a singular and most touching spectacle.

At the height of her sufferings, she cried with all her might, and the words she said were all acts of love and most perfect submission to the Will of God. She repeated: "O my Father! O my Mother!" (She called Jesus and Mary by those names) "O my Father! O my Mother! Still more! I want it since you want it." She pronounced those words in a way to touch the most hardened hearts
and she tossed and rolled on her bed, risking to fall to the
ground but two or three persons held her back.

The girl’s ardent desires for suffering were constantly
fulfilled. The doctor had spoken about applying hot irons
to her. The Superior, on the other hand, was ready to ask
him to give her some alleviation, but the girl pleaded so
much that they had to promise not to say anything to the
doctor and to let him do to her what he wished. She even
obtained by her insistent pleading that the coals and the
heater should be brought in so that everybody would be
ready when the doctor arrived. Another time she asked
the doctor—this was in my presence—to press the afflicted
section of the spine solely because it would make her suffer.

From Thursday onward the crises became shorter and
less frequent. The last one occurred at six o’clock Friday
evening. Warmth and sensitiveness gradually returned to
her feet but she remained incapable to the end of making
the slightest movement and the inflammation of the medulla
persisted in all its intensity.

Friday evening at four o’clock she was moved to another
bed while emitting the same sighs and cries. The same
night towards eight o’clock she entered in a state of such
extreme weakness as she had never experienced before: there was no sensible pulse; her body became cold and her
face underwent such a change that the ladies who were
watching at her side thought her end was near in spite of
the girl’s repeated promises that she would be cured.

When they spoke to her she was unable to reply except
by signs and even these were very weak. This condition
lasted until around midnight and then warmth began to
return and her pulse came back a little. She fell asleep
and during her sleep saw the same vision which she had
experienced eight days before. Our Lord and the Blessed
Virgin appeared in a great light, like the first time and she immediately awoke perfectly cured.

She remained some time in recollection and then at about half past one Mother Superior and another Sister who were watching her saw her turn one way then another in her bed. The poor child evidently experienced a singular pleasure in being able to move; she had been unable to do so for six weeks. The Sisters asked her what she was doing. "I no longer feel pain, Mother," she replied, and she sat up, put her hands on her back and said: "You see, I no longer have any pain."

She then asked to be permitted to go to the Chapel but Mother Superior was against it, for she did not want to disturb the sleep of the other children. The girl obeyed and lay down again. At three o'clock she said that since she had not touched her hair for six weeks, she would be late if they did not allow her to disentangle her hair immediately. They gave her permission to do so and she remained for an hour and a quarter seated on her bed, disentangling her hair with great efforts and without experiencing the least fatigue. "But you are hurting your head," someone told her, "don't go at it so roughly!" "Yes," she replied, "but we have to suffer something for the Good Lord."

She got up at five, went to the Chapel, supported by the two ladies who had watched at her side. She remained there for three quarters of an hour, kneeling a great part of the time, and from seven to eight attended two Masses, receiving Holy Communion at the first.

The doctor who had taken most assiduous care of the patient throughout her illness told me that he had never met the like during the forty years of his practice; he had never witnessed such a wonderful cure like this which, he thought, could not be explained naturally and was truly
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

miraculous. And yet he is not a man who judges things lightly; he is one of the most renowned doctors of the city of Amiens and it is only with great difficulty that he accepts extraordinary occurrences.

Since the twenty-sixth when the miracle took place until now the girl has not experienced any discomfort. Her legs which were weak merely because she had lost the habit of walking, recovered their strength in a few days.

You see, Reverend and Dear Father, that this case gives us reason for admiring God’s goodness toward souls that are simple and pure. Jesus and Mary have deigned to give themselves to this unrefined girl who is awkward in spiritual things, and Our Lord has spoken to her in terms showing that she is greatly loved by Him. . . .

[Prudence in Dealing with the Miraculous]

Don’t be surprised that this story is not in my own writing. I had written it before for someone else and, for lack of time, it would have been difficult for me to rewrite it. So I am sending you only a copy of my first account, but I personally composed it after observing the miracle very carefully.

Because the girl had announced on the morning after her first vision that she would be cured, I did not want to incur the reproach of negligence in a thing of such importance. I chose to be skeptical from the beginning and took every precaution to get at the bottom of what was taking place. Every day I went to see the patient on the pretext of encouraging her to suffer patiently in preparation for death, but in reality it was in order to study her every move. I dealt with her as one who did not attach much importance either to her visions or to her assurance that she would be cured. I always spoke with her as one does ordinarily with the sick, exhorting her, invoking the ordinary principles of faith, and I never recalled the things she had undergone. All that I recount

141
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

was either witnessed by me or was reported to me by the Sisters.

I beg you, my very dear brother, not to have this published in newspapers, nor to reproduce it in any printed form.

I copied this account for you because I felt sure that you would be edified and that it would give pleasure to my sister-in-law.

In the orphanage we refrain from giving all those details to the children, for we do not want to arouse their imagination and we also want to avoid doing harm to the girl who was cured, by exciting her self-love. The patient is now completely cured; her legs are firm and she is busy doing heavy work in the house.

[Pauline's Happiness in the Convent]

I almost forgot to say a word about our Little Sister Pauline. She is very happy at Louvencourt, the darling of the superiors and the idol of the nuns, novices and postulants. I never knew her to be so gay and friendly when she was in Strasbourg, as she is now. She is simple, modest, and candid. All this makes everybody in the convent like her. Hence, she too is happy; she is in her place and readily adopts the spirit of the house. I hope that some day she will be a good religious; she seems to be suited ideally for that. Every time I see the Superior, she speaks of Pauline with affection and great satisfaction.

Well, my dear sister, is it not better for you to have sacrificed this dear child to the good Lord than to have kept her in the world where there is so much trouble and misery? Being the good mother of a pious child, you are now happy to have made a sacrifice. Every Monday I go to preach at the novitiate of Louvencourt. When I finish, the Superior tells me: “Now, Father, I must let you see our little Sister Pauline.” And I never miss though I

142
sometimes am in a hurry; there is no escape; I must by all means see little Sister Pauline!

I saw her today. She asks you to send her the other music books. Please send them to her if you have not already done so.

[Miracles Sustain Our Faith]

P. S. Dear Brother: Those miraculous facts are for the purpose of encouraging us in the service of God; they ought to strengthen our confidence in Him. Some of us have most painful moments when we seem near the very gates of death. Our faith then strengthens us and firmly keeps our soul in the way to God. Such miraculous events serve to sustain our faith. We do not need them to preserve our faith and our confidence in God; nevertheless, they are helpful, for sometimes we are too much affected by painful occurrences and our courage is weakened.

A miracle makes an impression on our senses; it arrests the weakness that results from painful experiences; it invigorates us, gives us time to breathe. Having recovered [from a passing weakness], we then become strong again in faith and march on with renewed fervor.

[God Loves Those Who Are in Sorrows and Troubles]

Let us be content and happy amidst the pains of life in this world. Let us realize that we have a God who is full of goodness and love for us. He dwells in the depth of our souls. Nothing happens to us that does not take place in His presence. Let us be strongly attached to Him by that which lies deepest in our soul and remain in peace.

If that Divine Father, so full of love and goodness for us, permits painful things to happen to us in His presence, why desire something contrary? Is it possible for us to love
ourselves more than He loves us? And if He, who loves us infinitely more than we love ourselves, permits those things, should we not be happy and contented? But remember, my dear brother, that those who cling sincerely, strongly, and constantly to God, are affected only in their senses by those pains and sorrows and by that apparent lack of hope and confidence in God. They reject such sentiments in their inner being without realizing it, for we are conscious only of the sentiments which we experience and analyze. It is rarely otherwise. I mean to say that it is rare that we analyze and are aware of everything that is taking place in our soul when our senses are not affected and especially when they are affected in a manner different from that of our intellectual faculties.

Our soul has two operations: one that is pure, namely, an operation of faith, hope and charity; the other is a sensible operation. The virtues I have mentioned are felt, it is true, but such a sentiment is not truly the virtue of faith; it is a sort of overflow into the senses of those virtues which dwell in the soul.

We also receive two kinds of impressions: one is made intellectually by grace on our soul, to sanctify us and prompt us to act through those holy virtues. Be firmly convinced that those graces are not always perceptible by our mind. Very often we believe something totally different than what is really present in us because the grace that so powerfully acts in our soul is not perceptible, whereas we keenly perceive the unfortunate movements that take place in our senses.

The second kind of impression is in the sentiments; it does not take place unperceived. It is sometimes caused by the things that surround us; sometimes it results from our imagination, which is affected by things that are absent or by objects that are of a moral or even metaphysical nature. This explains all our temptations; but while those objects make
impressions on our senses, grace is active in the intellectual part of our soul and strengthens our faith, hope, etc. Because we feel keenly the evil impression on our sensitivity and do not clearly perceive the action of grace within us, we think that everything is lost, but we are mistaken. We are all that we were when we enjoyed a state of repose, and sometimes are even better.

Such states produce immense good for our soul, which I cannot now describe for you. One thing is certain: the state of temptation and pain is preferable to the one of repose and enjoyment of a spiritual good. Most of the time our soul is more perfect in such a situation. St. Peter, during the moments of great spiritual joy and fervor described in the Gospel, was not very solid, nor very advanced in piety. This holy apostle was very ardent when He told His Master that He would not abandon Him, even if it cost him his life. We know the answer eternal Wisdom gave him!

Let us not count on sensible spiritual joys in God’s service, but rest on Him in the midst of our afflictions and temptations. Job, amidst violent temptations, excessive pains and sorrowful lamentations, was more pleasing to God than St. Peter during the extreme ardor of His joy and his fervent protestations.

I think, my dear brother, that those reflections may be useful for you and confirm you in fidelity, peace and confidence in God.

If I had known that I would write so much I would have taken a larger sheet of paper; but it is too late now; I cannot copy it over again.

Father Francis Libermann
Happiness is found in God alone.

Letter Thirty Five  November 15, 1844  Vol. 6, p. 445

Dear Brother and Sister:

We have learned with much grief that our family suffered a great loss through the death of Very Reverend Father Liebermann [Vicar General of Strasbourg]. Life on earth is full of pain and tribulation. All here is vanity and nothingness. God alone must be our entire happiness. Blessed are we if, in the end, we are totally His. Let us not put our confidence in men. God alone! God alone must replace all else. Abandon your souls to the good Heavenly Father, and you will see that He will be your consolation and happiness in this world.

We never sufficiently appreciate the ways of God. His designs toward us are designs of love and mercy. Surrender yourselves into His Hands and allow Him to do whatever He pleases.

I am fully convinced that the afflictions He has sent you until now were destined to sanctify you, and that they have already been very beneficial for your souls. If you had not passed through the crucible of tribulation, you would be far from happiness and perfection. Continue therefore to remain humbly at the feet of Our Lord, and give Him complete freedom to act according to His every wish.

Once you are perfected in true virtues, happiness will dwell in you. Happiness does not consist in enjoying every satisfaction and achieving all your desires. On the contrary, we come closer to happiness if we encounter obstacles to our plans. Nature groans, but the soul is strengthened. It rises and is raised above itself, because divine grace establishes
itself strongly in it and perfects its being. We have happiness in us when we possess God!

Profit then by all your trials to advance constantly. Remain at the foot of the Cross with submission, peace and love. God will do the rest.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

Father Francis Libermann

36

A vocation must not be forced.

Letter Thirty Six

La Neuville, December 10, 1844

Dear Brother:

A few words about [your daughters] Pauline and Theodora. Pauline's letters are really written by herself alone! I never saw her in Strasbourg as she is at present. She is truly a beautiful soul, very simple and very good. She would not have been in her right place in the world. She is where God wanted her to be; she is developing and living in peace and happiness. Her piety is gentle, simple and without frills, and it is marked by a rare friendliness.

Caroline is very well liked by all the Sisters of the School and especially by the Superior. If this good girl finally decides to become a nun and to join the Congregation of Louvencourt, it will be a great source of joy for the members of that community. They are nevertheless very reserved in that respect and never make her suspect that they are thinking that she might have a vocation to religious life. The Sisters of Louvencourt avoid attracting people and I never speak to Caroline about this matter. Provided she perseveres in her beautiful piety, that is enough. However,
there is something generous and energetic in her character that makes me sure that she would do wonderfully well in religious life.

It would be a pity to let such a fine character and such real talent go to waste in the world, but once again, it is necessary that she be called by God. I will never say a word to her about that of my own accord; it is necessary that God speak to her heart and direct her toward it. He alone is the Lord of souls and He directs them where He wills! Nevertheless, I must confess that I greatly desire to see her go in that direction, but I will be faithful in never speaking to her about it.

How is good and dear Marie? Recently I wrote her a lengthy letter that was very earnest and very philosophical! Was she pleased with it? Poor Marie! She is all alone! She will have the satisfaction of consoling her mother who is deprived of her beloved daughters. I am very glad that the boys are doing well. Don't let them permit their older sisters to outdo them. See that they continue to be studious, good, docile, and pious, so that they will have a happy future and be the consolation of their dear parents.

Father Francis Libermann

37

Family news. Heaven does not reward great projects but judges us according to the disposition of our heart.

Letter Thirty Seven January 1, 1845 Vol. 7, p. 3

Dear Brother and Sister:

It is from Louvencourt that I am sending you my good wishes for the New Year which begins this very day. I am
doing it while the children [of the Convent School] are at
High Mass to pray for you and for their beloved brothers
and sisters. I had already expressed all my wishes this morn-
ing at the altar; nevertheless I am going to imitate our father
Isaac and wish you both “the fatness of the earth and the
dew of heaven” [Gen. 27, 28].

I received all the things you sent me—including the Sauerkraut. It cost me around a hundred and nine francs, which
is a lot of money, to pay for the freight. I sent Pauline the
books and a New Year’s gift for herself and Caroline.

I received a letter from . . . [Hebrew name]. She asks
me to find a tobacco shop for her in the neighborhood of
Strasbourg, as if I possessed almighty power! She preaches
me a sermon to convert me and offers me board and lodging
with her so that I shall be able to do penance or at least get
some comfort in my misery and affliction! She is married,
lives in a hamlet that has only three or four houses, and is
bored to death.

I will do my best to find a job for her husband with the rail-
road. I know that I shall thus engage in something that will
give me headaches later on. I believe that there is but little
hope for her, for she is a fanatic and has foolish superstitious
ideas. Nevertheless, I don't want to be blamed for neglect
and must use every means that may serve to save that poor
soul.

It is possible that she might be willing at a later date to
have her children brought up where they will more easily be
converted, and her husband, who probably deserves much
sympathy might be won by my kindness and friendship. On
the other hand I am not sure that I can find a job for him nor
that poor Mrs. . . . [Hebrew name] will accept it if I do
find one.

Pauline and Caroline are doing fine. Pauline has been
complaining about a pain in her back and chest. She is
afraid that there is “some trouble with her spine.” I think
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

it is just childishness. Moreover, she is in good health, eats and sleeps well, is gay and has no fever; it is just a few days ago that she began to complain. I told her to keep warm and not to worry. There was, of course, no need to recommend her to keep warm, for she is rather sensitive to cold and is usually warmly dressed. In fact she is never without a footwarmer! She says this is a good invention and that she was taught to use it in the convent of Louvencourt.

I have purposely written this paragraph in poor script in order that mamma may not be able to read it. May I ask you to write a short word to Pauline by way of reassurance. Let me add that she is not at all afraid and her trouble is insignificant. Pauline is the jewel of the house—she is loved by everyone at all times. She will receive the habit on February 2nd.

Caroline is also doing very well. She is highly esteemed and loved in the house, works hard, and is making progress. She is getting a fine formation; it is a blessing for her that she was sent to the Sisters of Louvencourt.

[God Does Not Reward Great Projects but Looks at Our Dispositions]

You are very right, dear brother, in what you tell me concerning the business of the missions. We now intend to send some of our men to Haiti. They will thus become accustomed to a hot climate and in a few years we will be able to send them to help in the mission of poor Guinea. We must labor for the salvation of those vast regions with their millions of neglected souls in spite of all the efforts of the devil. We must use prudence. God will help us. Unite your prayers to mine.

You think that the great reward in heaven will go to the great projects! It gives you great comfort to see that I am occupied with such plans, but you don’t see the other side of
the medal. You have no idea of the heartaches, worries and anguish that have come from my soliciude for so vast and difficult a task, at the sight of the enormous difficulties of the mission of Guinea, a mission so very dear to my heart. When I reflect that it is a poor mind like mine that must arouse all those peoples, tear them away from the devil and give them to God; that I must remove all obstacles, surmount all difficulties, find efficacious means to manage that enterprise and give it stability, I am at my wits' end. I am astonished to find that I am still alive amidst so much pain and anguish. It must be confessed that Divine Wisdom is making use of a poor lever to lift so enormous a mass!

I tell you frankly that if I had foreseen what I now behold, I should have been frightened and would not have dared to undertake so great a work and one that is so far beyond my powers. But I am now in chains and must go on! I will continue to move ahead until this corruptible body falls apart and then God will find an instrument that is more solid and more suitable for His designs.

As for myself, I trust that He will have pity on me and be merciful, but don't imagine, my dear brother, that it will be because of the great things I have undertaken. They are indeed great things, great enterprises—this I feel and it weighs me down—but this is not what will earn a reward, for God does not calculate the value of a beautiful project, but judges according to the holy dispositions of the heart.

I assure you, for my own advantage, that I infinitely prefer my sorrows and pains to the realization of the most brilliant successes. I will in any case do whatever Our Lord desires, and sacrifice everything in order to attain success, but it is not this success that will bring reward; on the contrary, the satisfaction resulting from it is always tainted by the evil heart and self-love.
Oh! I beg you, rejoice in your own lot. You are blessed because you are able to feed on divine grace in the secret of your heart, without being exposed to the gaze of men. The cross and all sorts of pains sanctify souls but great undertakings dry them up.

Those who are engaged in great enterprises for the glory of God resemble the employees of large banks. They have charge of the accounts and the money. They write large figures, make calculations in great sums but they leave their offices with empty pockets. Much better off is the middle class man who is at ease and has but little wealth; the money he counts is his own.

Rejoice because you belong to God and are working for your own sanctification and that of persons whom you are able to serve. God is with you. Abandon yourself to His mercy in all humility, confidence and love. This is my good wish for the new year!

Adieu! Entirely yours in the love of Jesus and Mary. Best regards to the children.

Father Francis Libermann

News about Samson's three daughters.

Letter Thirty Eight

La Neuville, June 10, 1845

Dear Brother:

I am unable to find your latest letter and so cannot give you a perfect reply to it.

Don't trouble yourself by trying to send money frequently to your children [at the convent school here]. I intend to
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

give them something when the ten francs you have sent have been used. They need very little; they have really no expenditures.

I admire Caroline. The good Lord gives her great graces and she faithfully corresponds to them. She is very fervent and takes nothing so much to heart as the practice of the Christian virtues. She is developing very well, is very thorough, has a good mind, a generous heart, a beautiful and noble character, is full of energy, and at the same time is mild and modest in her manners, has a sincere and solid piety, a conduct that is simple and without any affection in all that she does. I believe that the good Lord will make something good of her. I always hear great praises about her. She is loved by all her teachers, and not only by them, but she is loved and respected as well by the children; this shows her modesty.

Little Sister [Pauline] continues to be all right. She is always the same, always very satisfied, very pious. She is greatly esteemed in the novitiate and she, as well as Caroline, have won the affection of the entire house. She is a beautiful soul who goes to the good Lord with admirable honesty and simplicity.

Theodora is also doing well. They are pleased with her. I think that up to now her grades have been very good. She is thoughtless and flighty, but good. They assure me that she will do well and that they will make something of her. She is now an aspirant for the Society of the Holy Angels and will soon be received into the Sodality. This requires sustained goodness; in fact, they have nothing to object to her conduct. She has made her renewal of her First Communion a few weeks ago, after a retreat during which she kept silence for five days, and was not permitted to talk even during recreation. She was happy as a queen during that retreat. I believe she will be all right.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

I have to tell you the bad news that I shall not be able to come to Strasbourg as soon as I had expected. It may be possible for me to come between November and January; but when one is not one's own master, it is impossible to guarantee anything; so I am just hoping.

Adieu, dear brother and sister.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

39

Trust in God's Providence.

Letter Thirty Nine       undated {1845}       Vol. 7, p. 198

Dear Brother and Sister:

Just a short word, for I want this letter to leave today. Have courage! You see that God has already come to your assistance. Abandon yourselves with confidence to His Divine Will. His blessing rests on your house, for all your children give you many and very great consolations. I am morally certain that God has heard your prayers for a long time, for you have noticed that temporal blessings are beginning to come to you, namely, all that He has done for those dear children at Louvencourt and also a small increase in your income.

Put no limits on your hopes and don't prescribe a date for the time when you want Divine Mercy to manifest Itself. God is with you and will always be with you.

I continue to hope to be able to see you next winter. Let us pray! I personally am not without hope that I shall
be able to go to Strasbourg. It will be a little later [than we had planned] and I don’t yet know when.

Your brother,

Father Francis Libermann

40

Struggle between grace and worldly thoughts in Caroline’s mind. Victory of grace. Reasons for entering the convent immediately.

Letter Forty November 11, 1845 Vol. 7, p. 384

Dear Brother and Sister:

I consider it my duty to add my pleas to those of our dear Caroline, hoping that you will grant her request.

[Caroline’s Youthful Attraction to the Religious Life]

You know that she has ardently wished to embrace the religious life and has had that desire from early childhood. God seemed to inspire those desires in her innocent soul. No one else influenced her young heart to make her conceive those lively desires for religious life. She had but little association with religious and rarely heard any one speak about them, for at that time, as far as I remember, you had no connections with nuns. If now and then some one said jokingly that she would be a nun—and I don’t know that any one ever did—such remarks could not have planted such deep-rooted ideas in her soul.

I assure you that when I visited you in 1837, I was struck by that premature vocation and saw in it what is often seen in great souls that are attracted by God’s grace from early
childhood. Poor Caroline later went to a convent for her education; there she became unduly attached to a young lady who was somewhat worldly. Discarding her first love, Caroline then adopted tastes that were entirely worldly. It is clear that these passionate longings for the world temporarily cast out her desires for the convent. I spoke about this to you, my dear brother, when I was with you in Strasbourg at that time.

[Struggle Between Grace and Worldly Thoughts]

Caroline came to Amiens bringing with her the same dispositions. She was a good girl, full of faith. Her heart was pure but her imagination was full of worldly thoughts and she was very proud; these were the two obstacles that stood in the way of her first love [for the convent]. She remained that way during part of her first year at [convent school of] Louvencourt. Towards the middle of the year, she made progress in piety and although she was still very proud and full of worldly ideas, the thought of her vocation came back to her.

Note well that I never said one word to her about her vocation. She was the one who always spoke to me about it and initiated such discussion. I never did more than reply to her questions. Now, when those thoughts returned, they came to her in a singular manner, for she apparently feared that she might have the obligation of becoming a religious.

She then sought several times to prove to me that she was not called to the religious life, and you will recall that it was she herself who introduced such conversations. I never began speaking about this matter. I contented myself with joking about her fear of the religious life and always ended by saying that she should no longer consider entering the convent, that one could become a saint in the world, that, if she did not feel that she had a vocation, she should return to the world, etc.
I never said one word that could have made her suspect that I thought she was called to the religious life. Nevertheless, that struggle and that fear convinced me more and more that Caroline would later enter the convent. Mother St. Bernard, with whom I sometimes spoke about it, was of the same opinion, as well as Mother St. Alexandre, in whom Caroline placed full confidence. I saw in that struggle a combat between grace and nature but said nothing about it and let the struggle settle itself; I felt sure about the outcome.

Then came the holidays and Caroline became quite dissipated. Her relaxation gave some reasons for worry. Quite naturally, according to what usually happens in such matters, she conceived an even greater disgust for her vocation, and a greater attraction for the world and its pleasures. This, in fact, was her condition when her mother arrived.

[Victory of Grace]

Then came the retreat. Caroline was deeply touched by grace and took earnest resolutions against self-love and the spirit of the world. Her piety became more substantial and solid; she persevered and made great progress during that year. From the first moment of her good resolutions, the thought of vocation re-asserted itself with full force, and it remained with her, becoming ever stronger in the course of the year. Also, from the first, all her aversion to her vocation was replaced by a great taste and a lively desire for the religious life.

The reason for this change is very simple. All that aversion was nothing but the resistance of her worldly spirit and love of pleasure to the workings of grace. When those two enemies were vanquished, her aversion also disappeared. Since grace had remained unchanged and was even greater than before, a taste for religious life now replaced her temporary distaste for it.
Caroline at first had not told me anything about what was taking place in her soul. Mother St. Alexandre was the first to hear Caroline as she explained those things to her, and when Mother told me about it, I urged her to send Caroline to Father de Brandt who was the confessor of the nuns. (The convent's chaplain is still too young to inspire sufficient confidence for deciding an affair of such importance.) Father de Brandt is a wise man; he is holy and has experience. Caroline placed great confidence in her new director. It was decided that she had a vocation; there was no room for further hesitation—it was evident. You see then that her decision was in no way influenced by others, either directly or indirectly.

Now that the question of her vocation to the religious life in general was decided, a choice of a congregation had to be made. As ordinarily happens when a good person is full of fervor, Caroline was inclined to a life that was ascetically severe, like that of the Trappistines and Carmelites. Father de Brandt and I earnestly examined this question and agreed that she was called to a teaching order, one less severe than the ones she had mentioned. Having decided this, the choice was soon made, for Divine Providence had led the dear child to an excellent convent of teaching nuns, namely that of Louvencourt, and Caroline had no desire for any other community. On the contrary, as soon as she had decided to join a teaching congregation, all her wishes were for entering the convent of Louvencourt. We then concluded that she should remain there and I left everything in the hands of Father de Brandt. I only conferred with him after he had already formulated a definite decision. Without consulting one another, we had independently reached the same conclusions.
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMAN

[Reasons for Her Immediate Entrance in the Convent]

This gave us greater assurance, for it made us realize that they rested on reasons that were evident. This shows you that we have proceeded with the greatest prudence and circumspection and have not acted hastily.

Father de Brandt even waited a little too long, for he decided the affair only during these last days. According to his opinion and mine Caroline should ask to enter the novitiate on the twenty-first of this month, namely on the Feast of the Presentation.

Father de Brandt has just returned from a two-month's journey, which prevented him from making an earlier decision. Moreover, because we felt certain that Caroline would not meet with any obstacle on the part of her parents, Father de Brandt and I have not feared to anticipate things somewhat, and this for several reasons which I shall now mention:

1. First, to prevent Caroline from returning to her home. Such a return would have been useless; it would have been costly; she would have put herself in an awkward situation which would have done her great spiritual harm; she would have been in the midst of the world doing nothing, and what could we expect of a girl with her brilliant natural qualities?

2. Secondly, to confirm her once for all in her own mind. Caroline has a very lively intellect and a most ardent imagination; she is unable to remain in a state of uncertainty and, especially when a thing is decided, she must not be kept waiting long to put it into execution. I am convinced that if she had remained even two or three months in the world, after she had decided to embrace the religious life, she would have constantly felt very grave qualms of conscience, anxieties, and extreme agitation of the imagination. I am
delighted that the decision came so suddenly and is so close to being fulfilled.

3. Thirdly, Caroline would not have found sufficiently enlightened guidance during her stay in Strasbourg; at least she would have run the danger of not getting that kind of direction. It was to be feared that she would have been directed to a severe order, for one is easily misled by first impressions in her case. It is necessary for a director to have a profound knowledge of her inner self in order to be able to realize that such a severe order would be most harmful for her.

4. Fourthly, if she had been obliged to wait still longer, and without reason, she would have had to pass some months at home. Of course, she would have desired such a thing and it would have been granted to her.

She would not have been able to stay longer than a few months and after that what would have been done? It would have been difficult to decide her vocation before her departure. It would have been imprudent, almost impossible, to make an absolute decision, while she was away from Amiens. It would have been necessary to seek a place for her. Thus, we can readily imagine the suffering of that poor child who would have been tossed from side to side while reflecting upon the problem of vocation to the religious life.

[Be Happy About Her Vocation]

Let her good mother shed a few tears, but let them be tears of joy and happiness because she realizes that she has been judged worthy to offer two of her dear children to God. It is a great privation for her, but such a painful bereavement would come in any case, sooner or later. Is it not a great happiness to be able to suffer for God now instead of suffering a little later for the sake of the world?
I notice that you will find it hard to read on the reverse side of this thin paper, so I will continue on another sheet.

I don’t know what to think of the ways of Divine Providence which brings so many Alsatians to Louvencourt. Who knows whether at some later date God may not wish to establish a daughter foundation of the Louvencourt Congregation in Alsace? What a happiness for you to have contributed to that work! Let us not fail in our duty to Divine Providence! We don’t know God’s designs. Please do not mention what I have said just now to any one. If such a plan is in the mind of God, it will suffice to speak about it when the time for its execution has arrived.

At Louvencourt, Mother St. Bernard and the other Sisters are overjoyed because of that decision, regarding which they have always remained purely passive. I feel sure that you will not spoil that satisfaction and that joy; you will not put obstacles in the way of that poor child. The reason for their joy is that Caroline has won the friendship and esteem of all.

Poor Marie [Caroline’s sister] will shed more than one tear! I should like so much to console her, but I hope that she will generously offer her sacrifice to God. If she wishes to cry, let her think of the happiness of her sister. Let her go to Calvary and look at another Mary who will teach her how to be generous in making her sacrifice. There she will find immediate and complete consolation.

I hope to be able to console her later when I see her here with Caroline’s father. Papa will attend the profession of Pauline and the ceremony of the clothing of Caroline! Marie will also be there, and Mamma will come for Caroline’s profession.

 Entirely yours,

Father Francis Libermann

161
Letter Forty One  

La Neuville, December 7, 1845

Dear Brother:

I reply immediately to the letter brought me by a lady from Strasbourg who arrived just now and whose name I don't happen to know. I have also read your letters addressed to Mother St. Bernard and to Caroline. After due consideration, I have thought it my duty to yield to the opinion of Caroline's confessor, and to grant her what she so ardently desires, namely to start her postulate tomorrow, which is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. I saw no inconvenience in postponing it till your arrival, for I am sure that you will come.

[I Am Not in the Habit of Pressing Vocations]

You are greatly mistaken if you imagine that it is my habit to press vocations. Quite the contrary! My usual method is to let things drag a little; this makes it easier to judge the reality of a vocation; hence your reflections on this matter seemed quite right. But the present case is out of the ordinary and everything seemed to favor the decision which Caroline has taken whereas there were no motives to the contrary.

Caroline's vocation will be more easily confirmed and strengthened in the novitiate than if she had waited longer. Rest assured that if she adjusts herself to the life of the novi-
tiate and perseveres in it until your arrival, it will be a sign that she is truly called to the religious life.

It has always been my conviction and still is, that she was called to that life and I have sufficiently explained to you the reasons for my conviction. Father de Brandt and Mother St. Bernard feel equally certain about it. But whatever the proofs of a vocation, I am always distrustful about my own lights and I like to have things tried out.

[Reasons for Not Waiting Any Longer in Caroline's Case]

For one who has the temperament and mental character of Caroline, three months of testing will suffice to enable us to make a judgment about her vocation. This dear child has enjoyed the guidance of Divine Providence. There are many persons whose vocation I would not like to try out while they remain in the world. I did not fear to leave Miss Augustine in the world for a certain length of time, but Caroline is the sort of person with whom one may not take chances.

It is true that she is still very young and that it was not so urgent to fulfill God's designs. But if she had remained two more years in the world she would have run very great dangers, although she is now very fervent. No, my dear brother, let us not risk the loss of so beautiful a soul. All prudent persons were of the same opinion and entertained fears about her. I was the least fearful, not because I did not keenly feel the dangers she would run, but because I put all my confidence in God. I trusted that God, sooner or later, would bring her back to religious life, but I am convinced that if she went into the world, she would have a bad time there and would afterwards find it difficult to acquire the religious virtues. She would develop scruples and would be unhappy, first in the world, and later in religion. On the contrary, in the convent she will, without great difficulty, acquire the virtues proper to her state of life.
Moreover, by entering the postulate, she does not make any commitments and, on the other hand, will more easily ascertain whether she has a true vocation or not. All that is added [to the life of a secular] when she enters the postulate is a little ceremony. She already wanted to wear a black dress and is actually wearing one, so there is only the addition of a detail.

As for her trousseau, don’t worry in the least and don’t spend anything for that purpose. Mother St. Bernard takes full charge of it and she is doing it with her habitual delicacy: Caroline will think that I am the one who is furnishing it.

Besides, Caroline has changed a great deal. She is no longer so proud and is beginning to exercise herself in the virtue of humility. While preserving her nobility of character, she is becoming simple and feels but rarely those great emotions of pride which sprang from the spirit of the world which formerly filled her mind.

Caroline has a bold character. There was something magnanimous and exalted in her sentiments, and she yielded to that exaltation with all her natural energy and in accordance with the foolish pride inspired by the spirit of the world. In any case, Mother St. Bernard will arrange that matter with perfect delicacy and Caroline will never know that it was the community that supplied the trousseau.

In regard to your trip, make sure that you come! I shall send you the necessary money. In any case, I can always guarantee the sum of hundred and fifty or two hundred francs. If possible I will send you three hundred francs to enable Marie to come also.

How very much I want to talk with her during the few days she will be in our midst. However I cannot yet say anything for certain on that point. Let dear Marie pray to the Blessed Virgin that we may have the pleasure of seeing her.
I am not without hope, but we must pray to make this a certainty. . . .

Our community is doing well; the good Lord is giving us more and more blessings as we go along. Our mission in Guinea gives us increasing hope. I shall tell you more about it on another occasion.

I don’t think it opportune to tell you why we have not kept Father Acker. I can assure you it was not because he was lacking in piety and good conduct. Father Acker was an excellent priest, I can vouch for that.

Theodora shows admirable resignation. The Sisters are well pleased with her. She is making great efforts to curb her thoughtlessness and her violent temper and she is apparently making great strides in that direction.

She has grown so big and strong that you would not recognize her. It seems to me every time I see her that she has grown an inch since the last time. But her good mother must have no fears about her! She does not want to be a nun, particularly since Caroline is now in the postulate. One of her most decisive reasons is that she will never consent to abstain from speaking in familiar terms with her sisters!

My heartfelt greetings to my dear sister-in-law; I pray much for her. I have done so especially at the altar on the Feast of St. Barbara. I sincerely believe that, someday, she will have the consolation of seeing her dear children in a convent in Alsace.

Your brother,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Spiritual Letters of Francis Libermann

Happiness of his nieces in the convent. A mother's reward in heaven.

Letter Forty Two  April 30, 1846  Vol. 8, p. 128

Dear Sister:

Just try to imagine the joy we have experienced during these two days! Sister Saint Leopold [Pauline] is a little saint. She was radiant with pure and innocent joy; she was so happy!

Sister Saint Agnes of Jesus (this is now the religious name of Caroline) was "in heaven" and showed admirable calm. How happy you would have been if you had been with us during those days. God willed to impose that sacrifice on you, but I feel certain that you have prayed much and that your prayers have obtained great graces for your dear children, who have now become favorite children of the good Lord and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Don't cry, dear sister! Those good children are happy beyond all expression. Marie laughed, wept, jumped, and danced around all at once; she was so full of joy and emotion that she forgot what was taking place around her. Blessed indeed is the mother who has children that are so pious, so good, so lovable, and so happy! Be pleased and be happy for you have a right to be. I have known few mothers who were as blessed as you are. When the great day [of heavenly reward] arrives, your blessedness will be great and your glory immortal.

God loves you tenderly. He asks you to make sacrifices in this world, but how consoling to be able to make sacrifices for a Lord who is so good! How short our life in this
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

world! The sacrifices last only a little while, but they are accompanied by numerous graces and happiness.

Eternity will come and then you will be happy to see your children in heavenly glory. They will be queens who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They will be crowned with glory. They will be the privileged ones of Mary. And this good Mother will then look with love and kindness on you and your children. How sweet will be the loving kindness of Jesus and Mary, and how glad you will be to have made those sacrifices, especially sacrifices that are so pleasing to them! I rejoice with you, in Jesus and Mary.

Entirely yours,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

43

Requirements to be met by aspirant-Brothers. Family news.

Letter Forty Three

La Neuville, March 4, 1847

Vol. 9, p. 80

J. M. J.

Dear Brother:

I am using this poor quality paper because I don’t want to make my letter too heavy! Let me now reply to your own letter of February 24th.

[Requirements to Be Met by Aspirant-Brothers]

First, regarding the two candidates for the Brotherhood:

Since Mr. Vurm Michel already belongs to a religious community, it would be proper to ask him why he did not
return to it after he had arranged his worldly affairs. Even if he gives you a very good explanation, we should not be satisfied with that. We must obtain additional information from the Fathers of Bischenberg, and even at that, the matter will still be doubtful. Hence he should not be permitted to make the long journey before those matters are cleared up.

As for Mr. Meinrath Rhein, he should be told that he will have to live among Frenchmen. If he does not know their language he might become lonesome, for he will not be in the same house as Brother Joseph. The latter has done wonderfully well. He is never bored, although when he came he did not know one word of French. If Mr. Rhein knows French, he will have that much less difficulty. However we must still ask him whether he will be able to live a life of obedience in a community. If he perseveres in his desire to come to us, you can tell him that he has our permission to do so. Warn him, however, that if he finds it impossible to remain with us, our community will not pay for his return journey. If he perseveres with us, we shall gladly accept him and try to make a good religious of him.

It would be well to gather information about him at the Seminary, but you should warn him beforehand about that, for otherwise he might be annoyed by it.

In regard to the general procedure and questioning in such cases, I submit the following:

We want information regarding the conduct, religion, and character of the postulants. Are they meek or lively, supple, docile, active? Are they open, or negligent, lightheaded, melancholic, violent, lazy, loafers, talkers, etc.? . . . Have they any vices, such as overindulgence in food and drink? Is their health good? You must explain to them the sort of life they will have to lead. They will take the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience—hence they must remain continent. They may not keep anything as their own and must
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

obey with exactitude all the orders that are given to them, even those that are contrary to their own tastes. They must be ready to go to the Missions or to remain here. The choice will depend solely on the judgment of their superiors.

The postulants whom we shall most gladly accept are those who exercise the following trades or professions: carpenters, smiths and weavers; those who are able to handle any kind of job; mechanics, architects and especially medical doctors, for the latter will be the most useful of all.

I think that these instructions will be sufficient for you. However, do not send anyone to us without first advising us, unless you have a candidate who is exceptional.

[Family News]

I am not at all surprised about what you tell me regarding our poor Alphonse. I shall pray for him with all my heart and recommend him to the prayers of our two communities and the Archconfraternity [of Our Lady of Victories]. I wrote to him not long ago to make my peace with him. I doubt very much that I shall succeed. . . .

Your dear children at Louvencourt are all very well in body and soul. Sister Saint Leopold [Pauline] is always the little chosen one, Sister Saint Agnes of Jesus [Caroline] is doing well; she has her imagination more and more under control. Theodora is becoming a big girl; she is strong and better behaved. She is still a little too fond of laughing at the expense of others and finding their particular faults. She will overcome that habit for she is full of good will.

Francis is giving me more and more consolation. He is a source of edification at both of our houses and even at the college [where he studies]. He is successful in his studies, has excellent judgment, and is tactful in his conduct; besides this, he is mild and modest, which makes everybody love him. I hope that the good Lord will make something of him.
He exceedingly desires to continue his studies at [our Seminary of] Gard. He moves heaven and earth for that purpose, but especially heaven! He prays and asks prayers for it from everybody. He asked his sisters to make a novena for a special grace without stating its nature, but it was in order that he might be allowed to go to Gard after Easter.

I rejoice at the good news you send about Henry and Leon. Let them persevere and the good Lord will bless them. Give them my best regards as well as to our dear Marie whom I never forget in my prayers. Marie will tell me that I am more generous toward her in my letters than when I see her in person. When she came here, I didn’t want to embrace her although I grant it to her in my letter; but this is not surprising. When she came, she saw me and this ought to suffice, whereas now she does not see me and is far from me; I should then grant her something more.

Give my best regards to my dear sister-in-law. I pray constantly for her. It seems that we may hope to see her again during May of next year. This will give great pleasure to all of us.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN

Regarding Francis Xavier’s transfer to Notre Dame du Gard: his prayer has been heard.

Letter Forty Four Amiens, April 25, 1847 Vol. 9, p. 122

Dear Brother and Sister:

Francis Xavier has edified us by his sense of resignation; it was perfect! He said that if God did not want him to go
to Gard, he would be satisfied to remain where he was. So the question was no longer discussed. I noticed, however, that he continued to pray for that intention. I laughed at the idea and said that all that would result from his prayers would be the merit of his faith and confidence in God; but I was mistaken.

When we were getting near to Holy Week, I questioned him about his studies at the college, and it pained me greatly to find how much he was neglected. I subjected him to an examination and saw that he would be wasting his time there if things continued along the same lines. I was planning to take measures that would enable him to profit more from his courses at the college, but I was annoyed and even worried when I saw that none of my measures would lead to any appreciable improvement. Francis is weak in his grasp of principles and he needs explanations and corrections, but at the college they did not even correct his papers.

All that we could have done for him here was to give him daily reviews, lasting about three quarters of an hour. I felt sorry because I was unable to send him to Gard. It was impossible because the only one there who could have given him lessons has two classes of philosophy, a class for the young brother of Father Schwindenhammer, and two for our young Negro. Therefore, both I and Francis had to resign ourselves to God’s will. On the Friday after Easter I spent the day at Gard. Francis was there, continuing to pray to the Blessed Virgin with perfect faith, trust and calm. Everybody knew that he wished to remain at Gard and that he prayed most fervently for that intention and yet, seeing how calm he was, one might have thought that he was indifferent to it.

That same Friday of Easter Week, I paid a visit to our young Negro who was in the infirmary. He had pains in the chest and I almost despaired of his recovery. I decided there-
fore, in agreement with our Fathers that if the doctor declared that our Negro was unable to continue his studies, the lessons which until then had been given to Thiekorö [the Negro boy] would be given to Francis. I then asked our doctor at Amiens to pay a visit to the sick boy on Sunday, and let the fate of our good Francis Xavier depend on the doctor’s advice. Xavier redoubled his prayers and fasted on Sunday!

In the afternoon when the stagecoach was ready to leave for La Neuville, Xavier went to see Father Kobès. The latter told him: “You have to leave for La Neuville.” “But,” asked Xavier, “do you want me to take my books with me to go to class tomorrow?” “Yes,” replied Father Kobès, “prepare your luggage.” At this Xavier grew pale. Father Kobès then added: “Tomorrow you will receive your first lessons from Father Ratier.”

Xavier ran to my room, fell on my neck saying: “I have won my case!” I embraced him with all my heart and said: “That is fine! The Blessed Virgin has heard you, but do you realize that you are the cause of Thiekorö’s illness? The Blessed Virgin made Thiekorö ill in order to satisfy your wish!”

This playful remark gave Francis so much pain that he changed color, and his face, which had radiated with joy, took on a most sorrowful expression. Since then he has been offering constant prayers for the recovery of the poor sick boy, whose case is practically hopeless. He makes one novena after another and asks others to do the same. We shall see what the outcome will be.
LETTERS TO DR. & MRS. SAMSON LIBERMANN

Xavier will tell you what may interest you regarding his classes. He works zealously and the teacher promises success. Moreover, I shall give him an examination every month.

Adieu!

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

Francis Libermann
priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

P.S. It is true that the bishop of Strasbourg wrote to me on behalf of a young Jew of whom you spoke to me. I replied to him that I willingly accepted the proposal. I am glad to be able to do a favor to Bishop Raess; I owe him very much. So let the poor Jew come; we may be able to do him a good turn.

It is a long time since I heard from Marie. We would be very pleased to see her again in the company of her mamma! I will tell Francis to pray for that—he gets everything he asks for! I will pray earnestly for Eugene, especially on the great day of his First Communion.

45

Francis Xavier is excessively modest and dislikes talking with laymen. Father Libermann's procedure in this case.

Letter Forty Five {August, 1847} Vol. 9, p. 261

Dear Brother:

I am surprised to hear that Father Kobès is going to leave so soon. I received this news tonight, so I am unable to write you at length as I had wished.

173
Don't worry at all about Francis! He is gay and open during recreation; he does not get excited or go to extremes in anything. He had a certain tenseness which could have harmed him if it had been stronger, but there is no reason to fear from that quarter. The mistakes he has made and those that he might make in the future do not justify worry about him. Now, here is a very singular thing: when he is in the company of persons of the other sex, he shows very great embarrassment, but he is perfectly at ease when he is in our midst. I think this is one of the reasons why he does not like to go out and visit his sisters [at the convent]. I noticed this lately when I paid a visit with him to his sisters who are at Louvencourt. Jolly Theodora was exuberant as usual toward him. He reacted with gaiety and teased her with little sallies as one usually does with her. He even recalled certain things that had happened in the past, but during all that time he did not raise his eyes either to her or to his other sisters who are nuns. Theodora flung herself around as is her wont, but Francis kept his modest attitude throughout, too modest with his sisters!

I asked Theodora afterwards if she didn't think that Francis was too serious. She said she didn't think so and that she had found him as jolly as usual. Well, Francis spent one solid hour with his sisters without raising his eyes more than two or three times, at the most. This I noticed with my own eyes. No doubt this is excessive modesty, but I don't dare to plague him about it. Here is why: it is certain that his soul is quite innocent and that he has no difficulties or temptations that would prompt him to adopt that excessive reserve. He acts under the influence of an interior impulse and acts naturally with that modesty. If I sought to oppose that impulse, which
is a good one, I would risk causing him great embarrassment and might do him great harm.

That same impulse of grace gives him a distaste for everything that is not concerned with God; and he is, as it were, outside his element, when he is with persons of the world. This is the reason for his excessive shyness and embarrassment. If I combated that tendency in him I would harm him greatly and, at the same time, would not cause any improvement in his external conduct, for his behavior would then become very artificial and awkward and he might get the habit of acting that way.

[Father Libermann's Rule For His Nephew]

This now is my procedure with Francis. I make him work hard at his studies during the school year, but there are interruptions, for he must not study too long at any one time. He has several recreations each day, has two periods of manual labor and twice a week takes a walk with the Fathers. I urge him to be gay; he is faithful to this, and it is no effort for him, for our young men are always jolly without becoming dissipated. The dissipation of his companions would harm Francis, for it would make him become tense and strained.

He has enough spiritual exercises to nourish his soul, but they are not so numerous as to tire him. His choice of reading is good but simple; nothing exaggerated, so that he may preserve peace and moderation. I know he will not keep within the bounds of a wise moderation in this but it would be impossible to demand him to remain within such bounds. A few years from now, moderation will come of itself. To hound and harass him regarding that matter would do great harm, causing evil results which would not help his formation. On the contrary, it would give him a wrong inclination that would stay with him forever.
I do my best to put him in a normal disposition, distracting him so that he may forget himself. He will develop properly. I don’t send him out except on rare occasions, for I want to spare him that trouble and embarrassment which will disappear later without a struggle. Father Kobès will tell you about his studies and his holidays.1 Father Bessieux did not go as far as Strasbourg.

Poor Christopher’s wife is with us at Gard. She is a very good person and behaves very well. Father Kobès will give you details on that subject.

It is my hope that we shall have the pleasure of meeting again in this valley of tears. Let us be sure that God will give us that consolation.

 Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary. My best regards to my dear sister-in-law.

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

P. S. We rejoiced greatly when we heard about Marie’s happy return and learned that she had completely recovered from her illness. I recommend myself to her prayers and will pray for her.

1Francis Xavier Libermann joined Father Libermann’s Congregation, became a priest and made his apostolic Consecration at Gard in 1853. He was in turn novicemaster, superior and professor of Dogma. He was a General Councillor for almost fifty years. He died at the Holy Ghost Fathers Scholasticate of Chevilly, July 23, 1907,
II. LETTERS TO MRS. JULIE LIBERMANN

The two short letters that follow were addressed to the widow of Christopher Libermann, brother of Father Francis Libermann. She resided at that time in New Orleans, Louisiana.

46

Regarding his brother's death and her return to France.

Letter One  La Neuville, November, 1845     Vol. 7, p. 358

Dear Julie:

An indisposition has prevented me from writing you sooner. I am deeply touched by the painful situation in which you are placed as a result of the death of my poor brother. We are very grateful to you for all you have done for him during his life and especially during his last illness. He well deserved it for he was good and was sincerely devoted to you. It is unfortunate that he was so negligent in the matter of his religious duties; let us hope that God will nevertheless have mercy on him and let us pray for him.

I have preferred to take some steps to help you before writing to you. We are trying to find a place for you in Paris. All you have to worry about is the voyage. You will stop in Paris. I ask you to write me once more before you leave America to tell me approximately at what time you will embark so that we may be able to find something as soon as you arrive in Paris. I have been unable to find anything here. Moreover, Paris is a place of opportunities; it is better for you to be there. I shall see you rather frequently, for I often go to Paris. There also you will have my brother Felix and his wife, who are very good as you will find out. I feel
sure that you will be very pleased with them, although Alphonse and even Marie-Joseph [Christopher] may have told you the contrary.

I would have sent you some money, but I don’t know how to transmit it to you; I shall give it to you when you arrive.

I am unable to give you a letter to the bishop of New Orleans, for I never had any dealings with His Excellency. You realize that I would gladly have performed this service inasmuch as your good and Christian conduct deserves it, but it would be improper for me to do this. However, you could show my letter to the bishop, especially this latter part; it may serve as a recommendation for you. His Excellency will see by it that you are honest and good. Since I am at the head of a missionary congregation which labors for the Negroes, it is possible that he has heard some of the priests from Paris speak about me.

All the good things which my two brothers have said about you prompt me to do all that I can for you although I have not become acquainted with you until now. Have recourse to Mary in the midst of your pains. She will console you.

I hope to see you soon and I am, my good sister-in-law, in the charity of Jesus and Mary,

Your brother,

Father Francis Libermann

He has found a place for her in a convent.


My dear sister:

The request we made on your behalf has been accepted, so you can go immediately to the community of the charitable
II. LETTERS TO MRS. JULIE LIBERMANN

Sisters of Dinan. They are waiting for you and will receive you with open heart and arms.

I think you would do well not to postpone your departure. The town of Dinan is pleasant; the air is extremely pure and the good care you will receive there will no doubt make that place a most agreeable one for you.

Even if there are some mean persons among those who will be your companions, the majority will be good and, in compensation for everything, you will enjoy the company of the Sisters who are most edifying, for their entire life is one of complete abnegation, piety, and most tender charity.

I wonder, my dear sister, whether you yourself could not help them in some small way, in their admirable service of the poor of Jesus Christ? I think that your piety and your desire to gain many merits for Heaven will prompt you to occupy your old age with works of mercy. You will do your best to spread the “good odor of Jesus Christ” in that holy house, edifying the fervent, making the practice of virtue lovable in the eyes of those who have abandoned it, and gradually bringing them back to the right path.

I ask you to present the enclosed letter to the Reverend Mother Superior. Adieu, my good sister. May the holy love of Jesus and His peace always remain in the depths of your heart.

Your affectionate brother,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, Superior

P.S. Adèle and her little family are well. Thanks be to God, work is not scarce!

Everyone is well also at my brother’s in Strasbourg. And his dear children, Xavier and Henry, who are both at Notre-Dame-du-Gard, advance in virtue and in knowledge. Our nieces who are at Louvencourt have given Adèle’s youngest daughter a taste for the religious life. I believe that the good Lord will grant her the favor of a [religious] vocation.
Marie Libermann was born at Illkirch in Alsace in 1829. She was the daughter of Dr. Samson Libermann, brother of Father Libermann, and Isabelle Marie-Antoinette Meylert, who embraced the Catholic faith in 1824. Father Libermann was godfather at her baptism and took particular care of her spiritual well-being; Mrs. Halle, her godmother, took her to her own home and raised her.

Marie went to school with the Sisters of Notre Dame de Sion, a congregation founded by the famous convert, Father Theodore Ratisbonne, and which has always been particularly interested in the conversion of the Jews. After the death of Mr. Halle in 1851, Marie returned to her father’s house. When her mother died in 1856, she became the private teacher of Miss T. de Breda-Pitray. Both Father Libermann and Father de Brandt thought for a while that Marie had a religious vocation; in any case she benefited greatly by the spiritual counsels of her godfather and lived a very religious life in the world. Marie died of typhoid fever in Paris, on October 15, 1859, at the age of thirty, seven years after the death of Francis Libermann, her spiritual father.

The following letters show us how a natural affection for close relatives is sublimated and supernaturalized by those who endeavor to love God above all things. The last of the seventeen letters here reproduced was written one year before the death of Father Libermann; it reveals the high degree of divine love he had attained.
III. LETTERS TO MARIE LIBERMAN

New Year's wishes. Your three "Mamas."

Letter One  December, 1838  Vol. 1, p. 369

Dear Marie [aged nine]:

You, my dear godchild, will no doubt write a nice letter to your beloved uncle! It will already be on its way when you receive this, and you will probably be angry because I am getting there first! Well yes, this time I have come first to wish you a Happy New Year, and you know what I mean by such a wish.

I wish this new year to be very good, very pious and very happy. I wish that the most Blessed Virgin will take care of you, as she has taken care of her dear Child Jesus, for you also are her dear child! You have three mammas: first, Mamma Libermann, then Mamma Halle, but you have a third one, who is even much better than the first two, although they are very good and very lovable. This third Mamma, the most sweet, the most lovable, and the dearest of all, is the most Blessed Virgin. She loves you so much that she has wanted you to bear her name, so that everyone will know to whom you belong.

Be then a worthy and loving child of Mary, your great and lovable Mother! Marie, the daughter, must resemble Mary, the very sweet and most amiable Mother. The daughter must be sweet like her dear Mother, pious like her, modest, obedient, good, and charitable as she is. It is especially necessary that little Marie should be an enemy of worldliness. She must avoid vanity and flee from it as one flees from an evil smell or from a plague. She should be modest in everything. Oh! she will then be the well-beloved of her dear and tender Mother!
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

This, my dear godchild, is what I want to wish you. They are very beautiful things which will make you very happy even on earth, but much more so in heaven.

Most affectionately yours,

Your uncle,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN

P. S. Do not forget to offer my most sincere wishes and most respectful greetings to Papa Halle and your godmother. I often think of you in the presence of our good Lord.

49


Letter Two La Neuville (?), 1841 Vol. 3, p. 60

Dear Marie [aged eleven]:

Your letter gave me great joy. I knew as soon as I saw the envelope that it came from you. I was beginning to worry about your health. Knowing your heart, I knew that you had a good excuse for not writing; besides, it would be difficult for me to become angry with you, except in the event that you put aside piety and ceased to love the good Lord and the Blessed Virgin.

I am very glad that you are in that new boarding school. The peace and harmony which you describe speak excellently in its favor, for they show that a good spirit and religion reigns in it. It is my hope that everything in that house will do you good. I wish you had sent more details about what you are doing. Are you there the whole day? Are there rehearsals and repetitions? What courses are you taking?
III. LETTERS TO MARIE LIBERMANN

[Devotion to the Blessed Virgin]

I was greatly pleased to learn that you have pious associations with young ladies who love the Blessed Virgin. You know how much I want you to be a most devoted child of Mary. If you make progress in your devotion toward this lovable and most beloved Mother, your salvation is secure and you may feel confident that you will make a good First Communion. Ask for the grace to make a good preparation for that great act, and place yourself under her protection. Do this not only once or several times but every day.

I was sorry to hear that you were sad, but you did not explain the reason for your sadness. Not knowing the cause of your trouble, I cannot advise or console you properly. I know very well that you were not able to tell me all that you would have liked to say, because your letter was passing through the hands of others, but why not write directly to me by post? You know how dear your soul is to me and how greatly I desire your progress in piety and virtue.

While waiting until you tell me what is troubling you and thus making it possible for me to console you, I urge you to go with confidence to your well-beloved Mother [Mary]. Tell her all your troubles in all simplicity, show her the wounds of your heart, with tears reveal to her that you are suffering, and ask her to cure you. When a small child falls and hurts herself, she runs to her mother crying; she shows her the place where it hurts; she does not even have to ask her mother to cure her; she knows beforehand that her good mother will do all she can to console her. If she is covered with mud, mother washes and cleans her. Act in the same way with Mary and she will give you great help and consolation. There is this difference between Mary and earthly mothers: earthly mothers are imperfect and show their bad humor; they scold their poor children. Mary, on the contrary, can only console, comfort, and purify us.

183
I still have to give you some important advice, my dear child. It is about a difficult matter where your lack of experience might give you trouble while you are in that boarding school; it is in regard to the connections you will form there. Choose a certain number of pious friends, those who can inspire you with a great desire to progress in piety and virtue, especially in devotion toward our Lady. In making your choice, avoid being misled by your attraction for the natural qualities of others, such as a certain loveliness, cleverness, talent, similarity of character, nobility, wealth, and a thousand others which sometimes become the foundation for friendships. If you allow yourself to be carried away by such things, you run the danger of contracting friendships that are false, wicked, and harmful. Never become an intimate friend of a young person who is worldly, or of those who show great self-love, vanity, or any other outstanding faults. Choose devout friends, friends who are simple and whose friendship inspires virtue and religious sentiments, especially devotion to the most Blessed Virgin.

In a boarding school, it is necessary to have several friends, with whom one can speak intimately. You may nevertheless have one with whom you are more intimately connected than with others. But be on your guard not to be alone with her too often during recreations; otherwise your connection will soon become exclusive and will be bad; it then becomes a passion which causes all kinds of sorrow, prevents prayer, makes one lukewarm toward God and the Blessed Virgin and ends by putting oneself at odds with the teachers.

[Charity in Speech]

In your relations with your friends, never talk about others, except to say something good about them; never in-
III. LETTERS TO MARIE LIBERMAN

dulge in detraction. I repeat: never talk evil about any one, but above all, never say anything bad about your teachers. And I do not mean only that you must avoid saying such things with the lips, but avoid even expressing such things in signs, gestures, smiles, or certain airs and attitudes which others understand.

So I have given you quite a number of counsels! But, above all, love the most Blessed Virgin! Go to her with the greatest confidence and tell me what is the cause of your grief.

Most affectionately yours,

Your uncle

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN

My best regards to Mr. and Mrs. Halle.

50

Bear your troubles out of love for God. Practice obedience and charity, without self-pity. Don’t seek worldly advantages.

Letter Three  La Neuville, January 13, 1842  Vol. 3, p. 107

Dear Marie [aged twelve]:

I thank you with all my heart for the good wishes you sent me for the New Year. Ordinarily, or at least very often, people wish fine things with their lips, but in their hearts say the contrary. I feel certain that your wishes are sincere. I noticed, however, that you did not express everything that you wanted to obtain from God [for me] by your good prayers—a small Bishopric or a Cardinalate would have flattered your friendly ambition! But, thanks be to God, you do not entertain such hopes, and this gives me great pleasure.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Moreover, my dear child, a crown in heaven is at least as precious as earthly honors.

[Bear Your Troubles out of Love for God]

Don't grieve nor moan, dear child, because of the pains you have to suffer in this world. Pains are a great good, they are true graces with which God favors you. I hope you will profit from them. You were in need of such things to form your character. You are naturally inclined to flightiness, you know, and thus you might form a superficial character. Sorrows will make you a little more serious, thoughtful and vigilant in your conduct. Just be careful not to fall into the opposite excess. Don't be sad! At your age gaiety is "a must", and even at any age joyful characters are the best, provided they do not become lightheaded. Bear all pains with submission to the will of God, who permits them for your good. Not only will they greatly assist you in forming your character, but if you profit by them, they will enable you to develop true piety and solid virtue.

O my dear child, if you knew how great the treasures are that lie hidden under the ugly cloak of pains and contradictions, you would beg the most Holy Virgin to give them to you all the time! But I know very well that you are not strong enough to desire such things and you must not ask for them, either. But at least pray that you may suffer them with mildness, patience, charity, and without too much sadness. You must accustom yourself to put them out of your mind when they are present, and when they are gone do not recollect them and dwell on them.

[Obedience and Charity]

When you have trouble with your godmother and when she scolds you, take care that you don't entertain feelings of
III. LETTERS TO MARIE LIBERMANN

resentment and displeasure, for these will naturally come up on such occasions. Remember always that you must love her, even when she wrongly scolds you.

You must also try to do what she wants you to do, for it will often happen that you think she is wrong when she is right, at least to some extent. But even when she is wrong, the charity you owe her should make you act in a way that will satisfy her. All this you ought to do with a good heart and with very great simplicity. This is a very important lesson I am giving you, dear niece! You must grow in Christian generosity, for Our Lord and the most Blessed Virgin ask this of their children. Try not to be preoccupied with yourself, but learn more and more to pardon perfectly those who cause you pain and are unjust towards you.

My dear child, don’t be so anxious to be right in the sight of men; do not seek so much to please yourself, but do everything you can to bear all those pains for the love of God. This will make you practice great perfection, and you will render yourself agreeable to Jesus and Mary if you bear all those pains well and with contentment of heart.

[No Self-Pity]

Remember that I sometimes urged you not to entertain feelings of self-pity. Yes, my dear friend, and I repeat it now, don’t be so sensitive in regard to the pains you suffer from others, however unjust and painful they might be, but remain always sensitive to what might displease God and cause pain to your neighbor. This is hard to practice, isn’t it? This is why I should like to be with you every week for half an hour, to console and encourage you, but it is not possible, so I pray the most Holy Virgin, your good Mother, to do it for me; she will do this much better than I, so have recourse to her.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Be full of courage: Your good Mother will stretch out her hand to lead you. Try to do what I have told you: apply yourself to the practice of virtue, but do it with devotion, holiness, and generosity. Be worthy to be called a child of Jesus and Mary. Stop grieving about the pains and contradictions you have to suffer; forgive others with most tender charity.

I beg you to explain better some other time what are the sources of your pains. You only mention that your godmother scolds you because you don't work and you say nothing more. You should give me all the circumstances and tell me what you do to satisfy her, etc. You know very well that nothing you say will annoy me. On the contrary, I will be glad to get the most minute details regarding everything that concerns you and your conduct. Give me details especially about how you conduct yourself in the various circumstances in which you are placed; it is this which will interest me most.

As to the scolding of which you speak, it must be because your godmother would like you to do needlework, and even to help in some way with housework; this would be good for you. Do as much of it as you can. I am very sorry that you have been so brief concerning this matter.

[Don't Seek Earthly Advantages]

I would like to warn you about one thing, and beg you to observe zealously what I am about to tell you: for the love of God and the most Holy Virgin, don't be attached to Mr. and Mrs. Halle for the sake of some earthly advantage! I know I may hurt you by saying this; you will think that I have very mean suspicions about your feelings. No, my dear niece, that is not so! But I am afraid that, by and by, such thoughts might enter your mind; if they do, chase them far away. Don't entertain such low sentiments. You must love
your godmother and Mr. Hallé tenderly because of all the affection they have shown you and the careful education they have given you. You might feel sad if Mrs. Hallé seems to have less affection for you than she had in the past; but you must bear this with resignation for the love of God. Refuse at all times to consider the earthly advantages that you can expect to receive from them. Entertain nobler sentiments, sentiments that are more worthy of a child of Jesus and Mary.

I am convinced that you understand all this perfectly, although you are still very young, and that you want to do all you can to render yourself pleasing to God. If this were not so, I would not speak to you this way.

Make a careful preparation for your First Communion. Pray very often to the most Holy Virgin to take good care of you; ask her to give you good dispositions for that great great moment, the most important in your life. I am very glad that you have found a good confessor; this is a great advantage and it will help you greatly to prepare yourself properly.

I shall say Mass for you a week from next Sunday and the following Sunday. I think that you will readily believe me now when I say that I have not forgotten you.

Tell your mamma that I owe her a long letter but as I have told you, I don’t want her to have to pay the postage for another letter right now. I often think of her at the Holy Altar.

Give my best and sincere regards to Mr. and Mrs. Hallé.

I think that, this time, you will not be displeased with my letter. At least its length is quite respectable.

Adieu, my dear niece and godchild. Always count on the sincere affection of your uncle,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

189
Your first Holy Communion should be a cause of joy and not of fear. Crosses are better than consolations.

Letter Four        April, 1842     Vol. 3, p. 169

Dear Child [aged thirteen]:

Although I am pressed by work, I must write these two letters immediately, one to your papa and the other to yourself. The matter is urgent, for your First Communion is approaching. Don’t make a general confession. Be content with an ordinary one. If you have already begun to make one, tell your confessor that I advised you not to make a general confession, but do not tell him that I told you to say this to him.

[Holy Communion is a Cause of Joy and Not of Fear]

A general confession would be harmful at the present time. Try to have a general contrition for all past sins, but let it be a contrition that is full of love for the good Master. Why do you fear, my dear child? Go to Jesus with confidence: you love Him and He loves you. What risks are you taking and what have you to fear? Don’t entertain such unreasonable thoughts that inspire fear. Do you want to fear Him who loves you to excess, even with a sort of folly? Yes, with the folly of the Cross! He died for you. He desires so ardently to unite your soul to Himself, that He wants to become the food of your poor soul. He constantly intercedes for you before the throne of His Heavenly Father, and fills you with His graces and favors. Come on, then, dear soul, don’t permit the enemy to influence you. He will have attained all his desires if he succeeds in making you afraid, troubled, and disturbed.
III. LETTERS TO MARIE LIBERMAN

No! He will never be completely victorious! Mary, your good Mother, will defend you against his arrows. Those fears must never prevent you from approaching your Savior. On the contrary, the more the enemy makes faces at you, the more closely you should come to the beloved Friend of your soul and the more you must seek to fill yourself with the strength which the love of Jesus offers you in His most adorable Sacrament.

Receive communion as often as your confessor allows you. The means you use to put to flight your temptations is very good. Have recourse to Jesus and Mary. When, after that, there still remains an element of sadness, don’t be surprised and don’t entertain fears on that account. Try only to chase away the evil thought; seek to distract your mind from the object that has produced sadness by occupying yourself with something else. And if, even then, sadness remains with you, offer it to Our Lord; tell Him that you want to bear it for love of Him. Don’t be anxious—put your confidence in Jesus and Mary and all will go well. The devil waits to persecute you, because he sees that Jesus loves you and is ready to fill you with His graces. If you are faithful to divine grace you can be sure that you will profit greatly from that temptation. Bear it with peace, mildness, humility, and great love for Jesus, the well-beloved of our heart. Often invoke Mary’s assistance and increase your devotion for her daily.

[Crosses are Better than Consolations]

Don’t seek so much spiritual joys in Holy Communion; do not esteem them too highly. Such joys are but milk which Our Lord gives to children who are still weak in faith. When He withdraws these consolations from those who desire to love Him with all their hearts and attach themselves completely to Him, it is a proof that He wishes to strengthen them and make them advance in the perfection of divine love.
Benefit then, dear child, by Jesus' kindness toward you. Do not seek His good graces for the sake of the pleasure you find in Him, but with the pure desire to please Him and grow in His divine love. Cost what it may, you must give yourself completely to Jesus. Now, He wants you to go to Him in the midst of crosses and thorns; so much the better! This is hard to bear but it will make your soul strong and later, when you are stronger, the joys and your spiritual happiness will be greater than ever.

Have great courage, then, and submit your soul to the cross and the burden of temptations. If you are without spiritual feeling, make good resolutions, offer them to Jesus and execute them with true love and great fidelity.

Laugh when you feel like laughing, but laugh with modesty, as is proper for a young person. Avoid noisy and wild outbursts of laughter, but I like to see you laugh. Remember God in times of laughter and avoid dissipation. If you act in this way I guarantee that there will be no evil in your fun. Have courage, patience, confidence in Jesus and Mary, peace in your soul, mildness toward yourself and toward others, and preserve a humble attitude before God. This will enable you to triumph over all sorrows and temptations. It will enable you to sanctify yourself by means of those temptations. Apply yourself to those things and with the help of Jesus and Mary you will succeed.

Adieu, dear child! I will pray with all my heart for you.

I am, with all the affection of my heart, and in the charity of Jesus and Mary,

Your most beloved uncle,

Father Francis Libermann

P.S. In the future when you wish to tell me something that is urgent, don't postpone asking me about it until a special opportunity presents itself.
First Holy Communion of a child of Mary. General confession.

Letter Five  La Neuville, April 16, 1842  Vol. 3, p. 174

Dear Child [aged thirteen]:

I congratulate you with all my heart because of the favor you are about to receive from God. The day will soon come when you will have the happiness of being a holy child of Mary. Jesus will be in your soul; He will unite Himself to you in a most perfect manner and will be your happiness. Oh how pleased Mary, your good and most beloved Mother, will be with you on the greatest and happiest day of your life!

[Jesus is Coming to You]

Don't be afraid! Jesus, the most kind and lovable Jesus, will come with great sweetness to embrace you with the unspeakable tenderness of His love. He is not coming to you as a Judge. All the sins of your life will be forgotten. In the outpouring of His tender love He will think only of pressing you to His Sacred Heart. Do you think, my dear child, that Saint Stanislas Kostka was afraid during the vision granted to him, when Mary graciously placed her holy and adorable Child Jesus in his arms? Well, my dear child of Mary, you are one of the dearly loved souls of that Mother of holy love. She will also place her little Jesus in your arms; take care to press Him to your heart with a great effusion of love and do not have any fears.

But what did I say? Mary will place the Child Jesus in your arms? This is not enough! You will be more blessed
than the little Stanislas in his vision. Jesus will come with a love that is incomparably greater. He will enter into the depths of your heart; He will inflame your soul with His divine ardor. I beg you, my dear niece, don’t be afraid, but surrender to Him with great confidence, with boundless, immense confidence; deliver yourself to joy and love.

When Jesus is resting in your soul, talk to Him, give yourself to Him generously; do not limit in any way your desire to love Him and belong to Him. You should make to Him the sacrifice of your whole self, of all the pleasures and satisfactions of earth. The more generous your heart is the more Jesus will feel at home in it. Sacrifice to Him all your faults; use serious means and sincere resolutions to exterminate them for love of Him; declare war to the death against vanity, which is the dominant fault of your sex. Beg Jesus to help you so that you may be pleasing to Him throughout your life. Offer Him also all your pains, tell Him that you want to bear everything with patience for love of Him. (If you have no pains at this time, say nothing about that.)

[Favors to Ask Mary]

Do not forget Mary, your good and most beloved Mother, on that day of joy and blessings. Do you know the two things you should ask her?

First, that she will not allow you to commit any sin that would separate you from Jesus—that she may make you always pleasing to Him, always His devoted and faithful child.

Secondly, that you become like to Jesus through perfect imitation of His holy life. He gave us this life as a wonderful model of purity, of divine love, charity, mildness, meekness toward our neighbor, of patience, of hatred and contempt for the world, of the spirit of prayer, of Christian humility, and of the other virtues which can enable you to become a saint;
yes, my dear niece a saint! You must devote yourself wholly and entirely to Jesus.

Don't be afraid! The more you give Him, the more you will receive from Him. He promised a hundredfold to anyone who would make a sacrifice for Him, and no one has ever been able to say that He failed to keep His word. Yes, His divine word has always been and always will be fulfilled in such conditions.

I expect then, or rather Jesus and Mary expect, to see a great change in both your interior and exterior conduct, so that the angels themselves will be full of joy and admiration. Don't worry if you still discover imperfections in yourself. Jesus is coming! He will change everything, turn everything upside down, erase everything, so that nothing is kept in your soul except His Holiness and Divine Love.

If you want always to have joy and confidence, remember His words in the Canticle of Canticles: "My Beloved to me and I to my Beloved." These words are significant and seem to have been spoken for the day of one's First Communion.

While waiting for that blessed day, nourish the desire of divine love for that sweet Jesus, and often repeat those other words: "Draw me after You that I may run in the delightful odor of Your ointments."

[General Confession]

In regard to confession, tell your past sins again to Father Schaff, although they were already confessed; this is not because otherwise you would commit a sacrilege—no, you would not commit such a fault if you left them out, but on this occasion, confess them once more in order to be more perfectly purified. Besides, this act of humility will be pleasing to Our Lord and will be a good preparation for your First Communion.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

While making your general confession [as desired by your confessor] try to preserve peace of soul. Take a sufficient time to examine your conscience, but do not become anxious. If you forget one fault or other, it does not matter. The thing that must occupy you most in your confession is sorrow for your sins; try to be truly sorry for them. Ask Jesus to grant you contrition; implore the help of Mary, and you will not find it difficult.

Adieu, dear niece. I will not forget you, especially on the very day of your First Communion.

Entirely yours in the holy love of Jesus and Mary

Your uncle,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN

I shall gladly comply with the wishes of Mr. Halle, and will do the errand for your godmother. Tell them that I remain sincerely devoted to them.

Avoid sadness about your afflictions. Don't become bitter. Worldly joys do not last.

Letter Six La Neuville, February 8, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 99

J. M. J.

Dear Marie [aged fourteen]:

This time you will have to be satisfied with a short letter and I ask your permission to say just a few words to you, for I have already written letters to your papa and your sisters, and I have so little time! So I must ask your pardon, just this once!
III. LETTERS TO MARIE LIBERMAN

[Avoid Sadness About Your Afflictions]

I like the frankness with which you tell me that you are not keeping your rule, but you don't tell me why, nor what points you find hardest to observe. It seems that the good Lord continues to afflict you. Don't let this discourage you, dear child, for He does it because of His great mercy for your soul; this is the reason why He sends those constant afflictions. Those pains have already done you much good. I hope that henceforth they will help you even more, for your soul will be more and more strengthened in divine love. Suffer those pains with submission to the divine Will and count on His goodness. He will always sustain you and will make those pains help you for your sanctification.

The thing I want to recommend to you is to avoid becoming sad on their account. When you feel inclined to be sad, try to distract and recreate your mind, while, at the same time, avoiding dissipation. Confidently raise your heart to Jesus and Mary. Seek consolation in divine grace, in those strong considerations which you mentioned, in the Cross of Jesus and His sufferings, in the sorrows of Mary at the foot of the Cross, in the joy of suffering for love of God. When you feel fortified in spirit, then turn your thoughts elsewhere, but seek first for consolation in God and in Mary, your good and beloved Mother.

[Don't Become Bitter]

Take care to preserve mildness of character. In the midst of those pains your heart might go astray and adopt a wrong attitude; it might get the habit of entertaining dark, bitter, angry thoughts. Be on your guard, dear child; try always to keep an even temper. When you are sad, let no one notice it and especially let no one sense and feel it. Never indulge in bad humor, in the bluntness and brusque-
ness which are so natural to persons who are suffering pain and sorrow. Great evenness of temper, born of a spirit of faith and the desire to please God, is a great virtue. Be courageous and rejoice because God pleases to try you; it is a proof that He loves you tenderly.

[Earthly Joys Do Not Last]

I am very happy to see that the Divine Master gives you many spiritual consolations; you see that He loves you with great affection! Be generous in turn, my dear child; don't love the world nor the things that are in it, for all that is in the world is pride, the desire to enjoy pleasures, impurity, and the love of riches. Now all these things make people forget Jesus. Love Jesus and make use of the things of this world as if not using them: for the image of this world is passing; eternity remains.

This world lasts but the twinkling of an eye. That we have joy or pain, that we laugh or weep, that we are rich or poor, that we live amid enjoyments or privations, all this does not mean much and it lasts but a moment. Be indifferent then to all that takes place in this vain world. Seek only to please Jesus; in the midst of the world. He alone remains for ever. But, much more than that, He alone will make you happy in the midst of all the passing troubles of this world. Live your own life amid the corruption of the world in a most pure love of Jesus. In the midst of pride, live in the humility, simplicity, openness, and innocence of a child of Jesus and Mary.

Don't worry about your desire to laugh; this is nothing! Laugh when you feel like laughing, just avoid dissipation; it is very easy to become dissipated in the midst of laughter. Men might think that you are frivolous, but Jesus knows your heart. Provided, then, your heart always belongs to Him,
and amidst that laughter you think of Him and have the desire to please Him, all is well.

But I see that I have let my pen run farther than I had planned. When I talk to you heart to heart, I forget myself! So much the better, dear child, God wills it! Profit by what I tell you and my soul shall rejoice greatly.

Tell Elisa that I will write to her another time. Her three older sisters have stolen all my time! I must finish the letters because I must send them off. I love her with all my heart and as much as her other sisters. I will pray especially for her.

Your affectionate uncle,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

The emptiness of the world. Surrender yourself to Jesus.
Family news.

Letter Seven  La Neuville, October 24, 1843  Vol. 4, p. 404

Dear Mary [aged fourteen]:

[The World is Nothing; God is All]

I know very well how painful it is for you that you have to leave your present boarding school. All things come to an end in this world. All things pass, God alone remains and He always remains the same. He is always full of love and of tender affection for us. If we run after pleasures, satisfactions, worldly happiness, we are chasing phantoms, shadows which escape from our grasp, even when we take hold of them. How silly the world is when it sacrifices everything for its pleasures, its honors, and riches; when
it has no other goals than those empty shadows of reality, whereas true reality exists in God alone. And yet no worldling wants to seek that reality in God.

You should realize better than anybody else that the world and everything in it is really nothing. My dear girl, do not love this earth. Do not love the world and what is worldly; for all those who love the world and the things of the world, seek pleasures, riches and vainglory. How empty all this is! How little happiness those things contain! How full they are of trouble, passion, and affliction! All is but vanity and affliction of spirit.

Attach yourself to God with all your heart, dear Marie! It is in Him that you will find your highest good. You might still suffer afflictions in this world, but they will not be able to bore into your soul. You will take your cross, humble your soul gently and lovingly, submitting to God and abandoning yourself to Him. The more that creatures grieve and afflict you, the more you must cling to Our Lord and become more perfect in your love for Him.

My dear girl, you know my tender love for your soul and yet I must tell you truthfully that I cannot be sorry because I see you suffer. These pains touch me, but at the same time I rejoice because of them. Rejoice with me. I don't want to love you more than Our Lord loves you nor could I love you more; neither should you love yourself more than Our Lord loves you. He sends you this life of crosses and pains. They are for your sanctification; they must help you to detach yourself from the world and from all that it contains.

[Deliver Yourself to Jesus]

We can live in the midst of the world without loving the world. Jesus, our good Master, prayed to His heavenly
father to prevent us from loving the world. “Holy Father,” He said, “I do not ask that you take them out of this world, but that you keep them from evil.”

Don’t love yourself too much! The more you love yourself with excessive tenderness, the less you draw Christ’s love to yourself. Love Jesus, who is the love and joy of our hearts and the life of our souls. This, dear girl, is what your pains and crosses must help you to accomplish in your soul. From them will spring all the virtues and perfections which God desires you to have; you will thus become strong and firm in goodness.

Deliver your soul then to Jesus that you may suffer as much as He wishes. Don’t ever pity yourself. Don’t indulge in sad reflections. Avoid impatience and excitement, when things annoy and trouble you. Calm your soul in the midst of the pains and agitations which result from such contradictions. In critical moments, when others say hard things to you, recollect yourself in the depths of your soul, in union with Jesus who is in you. Near Him you will find the peace which otherwise you might lose. You will find there the love which you cannot find elsewhere.

Go to church as often as you can, to hear Mass, and when you are unable to go, make a little sanctuary in your own soul. Adore Jesus who dwells there by His divine grace; acquire, by and by, the excellent habit of adoring Jesus there during the day. If you prefer, go in mind to the holy altar and remain there to adore Him whom your heart loves and longs for.

You are a child of grace, dear Marie. Jesus is always with you and Mary watches over you. Turn your mind frequently toward them during the day. Act with gentleness and attention toward your godmother. Don’t be angry with her, my dear child, when she distresses you unreasonably. Let your heart be full of the love and mildness of Jesus. Be like that Divine Lamb; He allowed Himself to be torn to pieces, as it
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

were, and offered no resistance to His executioners, nor did He show the least impatience with them. Be courageous; imitate that well-beloved and gentle Lamb. His grace will then increase in you a hundredfold. Don't talk back when your godmother speaks harshly to you or when she says something against your mother.

Don't worry about your temptations. Despise them and turn the eyes of your soul elsewhere; try to distract your mind after saying a prayer to Mary. Repeat, from the bottom of your heart: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to You." And then despise that enemy and never let him make you anxious. Your soul belongs to Jesus; those images which he puts before you are only in the imagination; your will has nothing to do with them and is against them. Of course you feel stirred in your senses, but this happens in your emotional self; your soul is not truly affected by them, for it is pure in God's presence amid all those things. All that you must do is to reject those thoughts and never worry about them.

I will pray for you and I hope that no evil will happen to you. You will overcome the devil, dear girl, don't be afraid; you are a child of Mary—you are even a Mary! The devil is afraid of you.

[Caroline is Homesick]

Caroline is well; she spent two and a half hours with me this evening. The weather was fine and we walked in the garden. She is homesick and has shed at least half a liter of tears since Sunday. She does not get much sympathy from others, for she laughs amidst her tears. If Marie were with her, she told me yesterday, she would not be homesick. You see that every one has his own cross to bear. Caroline declares that hers is the heaviest!
Today her sickness was less severe, but yesterday, when I was with her, her tears were running like two little streams. I feel sure that she will be happy in that house. Tomorrow her homesickness will be gone, for she will not have the time to think about it. She has a lot of work to do; she is in the first class and the courses are very stiff. She seems not to have much confidence that she will get prizes, but it is too early to judge.

Adieu, dear child! Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary. Thank Mr. and Mrs. Halle for their greetings. I will not forget them in my prayers and I often think of them during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Francis Libermann

About Caroline. Frequent Holy Communion. The choice of a good confessor.

Letter Eight Amiens, January 27, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 25

J. M. J.

Dear Marie [aged fifteen]:

[About Caroline]

I am going to prove to you that Caroline is not totally dead! I have taken a large sheet of paper and you'll be able to see her writing in the same letter. My last one to you must have filled your heart with worry especially my postscript in which I excused Caroline for not writing on the occasion of New Year.

The fact is that Caroline is neither dead nor ill. She is perfectly well, gay, and satisfied. Her only trouble is that she is very busy and perhaps a little . . . , should I dare to say
it? Well, she will read my letter, but I must tell the truth! She is a little . . . lazy when it comes to writing letters, even to those who are, as it were, more dear to her than her own self.

Besides, this “laziness” is a good sign; it proves that the small keg of [detested] Sauerkraut [which papa sent] has produced its effect. I mean, her homesickness is gone! She will end by liking Amiens so much that she will not want to return to Strasbourrg.

[On Frequent Holy Communion]

You ask me to give you some advice for your conduct. Regarding frequent communion, I not only approve your desire, but strongly urge you to follow it. Approach the Holy Table frequently and take care to prepare well for it. Con-vince yourself that if you stay away from the Bread of Angels, your soul will become weak and your fervor will diminish. Don’t be afraid to go to communion! Our most sweet Savior is hidden among us on earth for the sole purpose of filling us with Himself. The more confidently we approach Him, the more lovingly He will receive us. If you receive this divine Sacrament frequently, you may be sure that you will persevere in piety. Moreover, if you are faithful to divine grace and strive to acquire solid virtues, you may be confident that this Sacrament will help you greatly and will make you reach solid perfection in a short time.

Be courageous, therefore, in your effort to acquire solid piety; go to Holy Communion frequently to find in it strength and fidelity and an increase of grace! You will see what great blessings God will pour into your soul.
I earnestly advise you to change your confessor. Find a Jesuit Father. Make a careful choice, for, according to St. Francis de Sales, we should choose a confessor among ten thousands. Do not yield to human respect or remorse or worry because of the change. You need it and I trust that you will benefit by it.

I wished you a Happy New Year at the Holy Altar. I am very busy. I had planned to write to all my friends, but it would have taken considerable time (it is getting worse every year); so I decided to beg their pardon. I shall make up for it by praying a little more for their temporal and spiritual well-being.

I beg you, my dear child, to write to me immediately every time you have any difficulty regarding your soul. You know that I am always ready to please you and especially to help you on the way to salvation and make you advance in perfection. You know also what happiness your progress gives me.

Adieu then, dear Marie. May the peace and the love of Jesus and His holy and good Mother constantly increase in your soul!

Your most devoted and affectionate uncle,

Father Francis Libermann
Separation from those whom we love unite us more strongly with God. On Temptations.

Letter Nine August, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 303

Dear Marie [aged fifteen]:

If you were wicked enough to be displeased with me, you would surely be displeased in the present circumstance, for I am taking Caroline and Pauline away from you! I feel certain, however, that you will heartily make the sacrifice to God for the good of Pauline. I trust that the Blessed Virgin, your good and beloved patroness, will console you in your isolation. You will simply attach yourself ever more to Our Lord and be more and more faithful to Him.

[Separation from Relatives Unites Us More with God]

You see how short-lived are the most innocent joys of earth. There are separations and more separations, without end; but it is precisely through such separations that our souls are perfected in true and solid virtue; it is precisely by them that we attach ourselves more and more to God. Blessed are you, dear child, if all those privations and so many others also to which we are subject in this world, make you cling and bind you more firmly to the divine love of Jesus, our eternal Friend. There will never be any separation from Him. When your soul is united to Jesus, it will, I hope, remain united to Him forever and will always enjoy His love. Be courageous in bearing that privation and learn to become even more closely united with Jesus—in Him you will find your only true happiness.

I fully understand what you are thinking: your good mother will grieve in her loneliness and will be eager to have
you with her, but you should discuss this matter with your father before making a decision. It is his right to determine whether you should return home or remain with Mr. Halle. Your line of conduct in this matter (a truly delicate one!) is very simple. When your mother speaks to you about your return home, tell her that you are perfectly willing to return and that you will be happy to be able to console her with your company, that if your father tells you to go back home, you will do so immediately, and that you advise her to speak to your father and make him decide that you will return. Remain quiet in the meantime, and ready to do whatever the good Lord may desire. By this complete conformity of your will to the divine will, you will avoid the embarrassment which you would suffer if you made your own choice about that.

[Strength and Joy Amidst Temptations]

Fear nothing, dear child of Mary! Have confidence in your good Mother. The devil will not be able to harm you in any way. Your dear soul is well guarded; Jesus makes His home in it and He wants to establish His throne in you. Nothing profane will dare to enter the sanctuary of Jesus. Moreover, our Lady protects you and carries you in her arms. All the temptations which the devil stirs up are but grimaces of the enemy; despise them, but don't worry about them. Don't worry about anything that is precious on this earth, my dear child, but turn your mind immediately to Jesus and Mary, and fear nothing.

Be fervent, and I promise you that the devil will never have power over you. He can tempt you, but he was also permitted to tempt Saint Catherine of Siena and numerous other most holy souls. Take care not to lose your peace of mind in the midst of these temptations. You did an excellent thing to ask permission to receive Holy Communion frequently.
It is in Jesus that you will find strength and consolation in all painful circumstances.

If you take the precaution which you have laid down for yourself, namely, to flee the occasions of sin, and if your soul is fervent, you may feel secure amidst temptations; they will not be dangerous and you will have no reason to fear that you will displease our good Lord Jesus. On the contrary, they will be an occasion of merit for you; besides, you will have one more reason for clinging more closely to Him and being more faithful.

Do not grieve because you suffer such troubles. On the other hand, be gay, without yielding to dissipation. Don’t be too serious nor too preoccupied—this is of no value. Always preserve a sweet peace in your heart and live with modest joy.

You have a right to such joy and peace, for you are a child of God, beloved by Jesus and Mary; it is not proper for you to be sad and to grieve. If you find that you are poor in virtues in comparison with the Saints, do your best to reach their level. Your aims must be as high as that; and you will be successful, my dear child, if you are faithful. A new-born baby does not grow immediately to adulthood. A soul which enters the road of holiness, likewise, does not reach the highest level at once. First be a child of God, then become an adolescent, and finally reach maturity. Be faithful and Jesus will grant you this grace. Remember that, as with the body, some grow slowly, others more rapidly; so is it with spiritual growth. Pray to our Lady that you may be one who grows rapidly. Adieu, dear Marie.

Your most devoted uncle,

Father Francis Libermann
P.S. August 13th. I have just written a short word to your papa. It is probable that Pauline will leave Strasbourg at the end of this month. I rejoice because I shall be able to see your good mother once more.

57

Earthly joys are nothing but vanity. You belong to God: do not serve the world. Display the happiness of a child of God.

Letter Ten La Neuville, November 16, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 446

J. M. J.

Dear Marie [aged sixteen]:

It is about time to write to you, for you might imagine that I am forgetting you. You might seem to have good reasons for such a complaint, but I can tell you positively that you are mistaken. We often think of you. There is, I believe, no conversation between your sisters and myself in which your name does not come up, and it is clear from the way we talk about you that you are not the least interesting topic of our conversations.

I see Pauline—pardon me, Sister Pauline, our little Sister Pauline—and Caroline once every week. Come too, we shall all have fun together! But what am I saying? This is unkind, for you cannot be in two places at the same time. I know, however, that your heart performs that miracle: it is in two places at the same time, and your mind very often follows your heart as far as Louvencourt, and sometimes drops in for a moment at La Neuville.
On the other hand, I know very well that such [mental] journeys don't satisfy you. You'd like to bring us all together at Strasbourg, so that your heart would not be divided amongst us and your mind would not be forced to travel so far. But what can we do? This is one of the sorrows of our present life. We must not seek happiness on earth—not even in the most legitimate pleasures. God will one day be our sovereign happiness in heaven. He wants also to be the sovereign Lord of our affections on earth. He desires to show us constantly that all is nothingness on this wretched earth and to prevent us from seeking our happiness in fragile things. He constantly upsets all our plans, destroys our hopes, counteracts all our affections and opposes our desires.

O vanity of vanities! Everything in this world is but vanity and affliction of spirit! Even if we had everything our heart longs for, we should have nothing; and this very nothing would slip away from our grasp like a shadow. What a sad state one is in who chooses to live his life solely from the natural standpoint.

If God were to grant us all the pleasures our poor heart naturally desires, we would lose the little good that is in us; all the wickedness and malice which sin has put in us would reappear; we would be full of faults and miseries which would render us even more miserable than if we were deprived of all pleasures. Even innocent enjoyment becomes like a fertilizer that nurtures the development of vices and defects; and those vices and defects disfigure our souls and render us soft, cowardly, weak, and delicate.

There is no doubt, then, that the best gifts of God's mercy to those whom He loves, are privations, obstacles, pains, and
III. LETTERS TO MARIE LIBERMANN

tribulations. If we are faithful, our souls will find the true happiness which lies in God alone. He alone never turns away from us, never separates Himself from us. In the midst of pains, difficulties and temptations, enter into the depth of your soul and you will find there that true friend, that great and perfect consoler. Seek your joy and happiness in Him alone! Seek your consolation solely in His goodness. Your soul is a sanctuary in which He has established His abode. He does not leave you for an instant; you must likewise never leave Him. He is pleased in making your soul His dwelling place; be happy also to be able to visit Him often within that living tabernacle where He dwells with delight. Make your dwelling more and more pleasing to Him.

[Live in the World but Don’t Be of the World]

Do not love the world nor its pleasures and frivolous amusements; Do not love the world’s vanities; do not seek to please or satisfy the world. Dear soul, you are always consecrated by the presence of your God who dwells in you; you are often locked in the arms of God, honored by union with Him and His tender love for you. Privileged soul, beloved of the divine Jesus, do not give to the world what is so dear to our beloved Savior. This would be casting pearls before swine. Live in the world since it is necessary, but don’t be of the world.

When we surrender to the world, even when we succeed in avoiding sin, we suffer immense losses. God’s Spirit withdraws from us, our love for God diminishes, our taste for piety disappears, our soul is weakened, and our mind dreams only of amusement, vanity and pride. We then idolize our own selves; we no longer see anything but our selves; we love ourselves alone and live only for ourselves; every sort of passion is re-awakened in us; pride is in command; our spirit is darkened and we become insensible, es-
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

especially to all that belongs to piety; we become indifferent to God; we live constantly in an indescribable vagueness; our heart is a void; our mind is sad, agitated and flighty. We find satisfaction only in excitement and dissipation, or in the glamor and fantasies of pride. This pride in which we seek all our happiness becomes a horrible tyrant who tears our soul apart; it tortures and breaks it in pieces; it worries, harrases it and constantly throws it out of joint. The desire to please and the fear of having displeased others are the two spurs which pride uses to goad those who abandon themselves to it. Poor souls! They will never enjoy rest during their entire life in this world, and great are the woes they must expect after their death.

How wretched are those who give themselves to the world. They live the lives of galley-slaves! And what remains? What reward? They lose all the virtues they perhaps had acquired, all the graces with which they had been filled, and all the glory which they were destined to enjoy. The time of folly passes very quickly; one moment, the twinkling of an eye, and earthly life is gone with all its pleasures, vanities and frivolous amusements.

Watch yourself then, my dear child. You are now alone. Your devout sisters will no longer be with you to set the good example for you and encourage you in the service of God, in a life of faith and the practice of the Christian virtues. You are now more liable to follow the natural inclination which prompts you to seek amusements, pleasures, and vanity. Be firm in your faith, beloved child of Jesus and Mary! Be faithful to Divine Love. Give everything to Jesus and you will have everything—more than everything, a hundred times more! He said so and His word is eternally true. Have courage, dear child. Preserve purity of soul and simplicity of mind, and keep your heart fervent in the ways of God.
III. LETTERS TO MARIE LIBERMAN

[Your Natural Assets May Endanger Your Soul]

Do not associate too much with the world; avoid boisterous pastimes. Make a careful choice of friends; have few and let them be good, fervent Christians. Guard especially against vanity and the desire for the esteem of others. You are in particular danger in this respect, dear child.

You study and your efforts are crowned with success. You have an attractive face and people who are interested in your family like you. All these advantages are nothing and do not deserve our attention. You are young, and at your age vanity and self-complacency are, as it were, woven into the very fabric of corrupt nature. Men contribute to our vanity by praising us, revealing their high opinion of us and expressing their affection. This is very harmful, for it prompts us to esteem ourselves and makes us acquire habits of self-love.

I assure you that I prefer to see you undergoing humiliations and vexations on the part of others, rather than to have you receive their praises and be raised to high heaven by them. I know, dear child, that it is not your fault that people praise you and love you, but this, nevertheless, is dangerous for you. Try to give your soul completely and most fervently to the divine Savior. Be constant in your generosity, and give yourself to a piety that is sincere and solid. Be convinced that all natural advantages are nothing in themselves; all is vanity and affliction of spirit in this world because all passes away and ends in nothing.

When our body has disintegrated in the tomb and our soul appears before our sovereign Judge, all our so-called advantages will be valueless. Being fully convinced of this truth, do not esteem nor love anything; attach yourself to Jesus alone, to His Divine Love, and all the perfect virtues that flow from it. In them you have something that is true, substantial and that shall remain for all eternity!
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

[Be Gay, Serene and in Peace, for you Are a Child of God]

Be modest in your conduct, your bearing, your manners, and your words. Speak little, but avoid becoming taciturn. Always be gay and contented, you are a child of God, you should be contented and peaceful. A multiplicity of words pour out your mind like water and foster the growth of self-love. Avoid also speaking too little, for too great a reserve constricts the soul. Say little or nothing in ordinary conversation about the subjects of your studies or the knowledge you have acquired; otherwise much self-love will mingle with such conversations and it will take deep roots in you.

Now let me give you a fundamental rule for your conversations. Adapt your conversation to the tastes and habits of the persons with whom you speak. However, don't hold idle conversations with worldly persons whose tastes and habits are full of vanity... It is somewhat difficult to observe that rule. Sometimes conversations are boring and futile, but we must learn to overcome ourselves and bear this annoyance in a spirit of charity, for the love of God. Let me add, however, that you must not seek too much the company of persons whose conversations are of that kind, but adjust yourself to them to the extent that the good Lord desires it and your conscience allows you to yield to the taste of those persons.

I also advise you not to speak too much about science, even with persons who love it; in this we should keep to a certain caution and reserve. Avoid a sharp and dogmatic tone; do not start the conversation on such topics and speak of such things with modesty; avoid parading your knowledge. Do not judge or despise anyone because of his ignorance; be kind and spare those who speak about things they do not know; do not always correct their errors, unless it involves the interest of God's glory—for example when it concerns truths of religion.
III. LETTERS TO MARIE LIBERMANN

[Don't be Afraid of God]

Keep your conscience peaceful, tranquil, and free. You are a child of God. Jesus loves you tenderly. Do not approach Him with fear. Cast out every thought that inspires fear and fill yourself with love. Go to God as a child approaches his father or mother. I say all this out of the great tenderness which Divine Goodness gives me for your soul and because I ardently desire to guard you against all evil and make you advance in true virtue.

Nourish your soul as often as possible with the Holy Eucharist. Prepare yourself for it through conduct that is humble, simple and full of love and through the zealous practice of the most perfect virtues of the Christian religion by renunciation of creatures and of yourself.

"If any one wants to follow me," says the Divine Savior, "let him renounce himself, bear his cross, and follow Me." Carry the particular cross which Divine Goodness sends you each day. Bear it with patience, mildness, humility, and submission to God's will. This is the principal preparation for communion. Prepare your soul immediately for it as well—this is useful. Immediate preparation consists of desires, longings of the heart, and exercises of piety performed for that purpose.

I end telling you once more: Be gay, open and tranquil as is proper to a beloved child of Jesus and Mary.

Entirely yours in their holy charity,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Dear Marie [aged sixteen]:

It's time for me to reply to your letter of January 5th. I feel sure, dear child, that you are not angry with me because of the delay. I am reduced to slavery and no longer belong to myself. My time is no longer at my own disposal. Everything belongs to the Master, whose slave I am. I must always first accomplish His business. There is no longer any enjoyment for me on earth; I must not seek by own satisfaction in the affection of those who are dear to me; I may grant it to myself only when I find a moment of leisure. Don't grieve, then, dear child, and don't think that I no longer love you because I have neglected you. You see that this kind of neglect proves just the opposite—I do not neglect you—I have replied and will continue to reply to all the wishes you express in your letter. I will reply to them at the Holy Altar. Believe me, I am praying constantly for you and hope that God's goodness will hear my prayers.

[True Love is Not the Same as Emotional Feelings]

Don't worry about occasional interior dryness. Do not imagine on such occasions that you no longer love our good Savior. The love you have for Jesus ought not to consist in a show of emotion. Our love for God is an interior attachment; it is an attachment of our soul in virtue of which we are ever ready to sacrifice everything to Him and submit,
with all our heart, to all He wills. It makes us accomplish faithfully His every wish, however great the cost. It makes us prepared to sincerely renounce all things and ourselves, to renounce our pleasures and satisfactions for love of Him. This attachment prompts us to deliver our soul generously to God so that He can do with it what He pleases. It makes us bear our pains and daily crosses with peace and for the love of Him alone until at last, we seek to please our Beloved in all things that are in accord with His good pleasure.

True love consists in giving ourselves completely to God alone, even while we experience no emotion. I should like to prove this to you by one example.

You have a great love for your father and mother, but you do not always feel a sensible emotion of that affection. Being always with them you are accustomed to enjoy their company and, although you feel no sensible emotion, you love them. Your habitual and constant exercise of filial love diminishes your sensible awareness of it, while it increases the reality of your love.

There are circumstances that from time to time renew the sensible experience of your love; for example, when your parents give you some mark of affection, or when you fear to have caused them pain. Then you become aware of the various emotions that are rooted in your love. Sometime it is an emotion of joy, as in the first instance, and at other times a feeling of sadness, pain, compassion.

Well, my dear child, doesn't the same thing happen in your relations with our Heavenly Father? Our beloved Jesus is your good Father; you are His child of predilection. As soon as you have the desire to love Him, you may rest assured that you truly do love Him. Every act of desire of that sort is an act of love; hence you are not to be pitied when you are in a state of spiritual dryness. All you have to do in such moments is to remain humbly at the feet
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

of Jesus, being disposed to sacrifice every other affection for Him and, in general, all things and yourself, and to remain in peace and confidence in His goodness and mercy.

[The Degrees of Love for God]

Now, to enlighten you fully regarding the practice of the love of God, let me show you its various degrees.

The first consists in abhoring mortal sin. This is necessary for your salvation.

The second consists in abhoring even venial sin. As soon as you have an attachment to an earthly object, as soon as you cling to anything whatsoever that is somewhat opposed to God, as soon as you entertain in your heart a sentiment which God disapproves, you breach your love for God, you do not love God as much as those other things.

Thus far there is question of a love for God that is necessary and demanded by the order of things. But remember that there is no fault without free consent of your will. Now I can tell you for a fact that your will loves God constantly, and if you commit an occasional fault, it is one of weakness; it is done with imperfect knowledge and in a passing way. It is already a great satisfaction for you to know that your soul dwells in divine love. Poor soul! Be fervent and thereby be happy!

The third degree consists of loving God above all things, even in things that are otherwise lawful. This is perfect love, the love of perfection. In this case we always prefer, from among good and holy things or actions, those we believe to be most pleasing to God. We then still love the things of earth—we still have a taste for, and a delight in creatures and in the satisfactions and pleasures of this world—but we do it with moderation and without offense to God. However, as soon as we know that it would be more pleasing to God to deprive ourselves of something, we immediately
make the sacrifice of it; thus we prefer to please God rather than ourselves, even when we could legitimately indulge in that satisfaction without offending God. When our soul is so disposed, we always try to practice virtue in a perfect degree. We seek always to please God and often offer Him sacrifices and privations.

This thought gives me great joy and consolation, for I behold your soul in that state, with those desires, that tendency. And yet you keep saying that you do not love God! No, dear child, you are not telling the truth when you say that! Try merely to perfect this higher degree of love in your heart. You do not yet possess it to perfection; progress from virtue to virtue; strengthen your soul and be faithful.

Finally, there is the fourth degree, which consists of loving nothing but God alone, and all creatures and ourselves in God and for God. This is the purest kind of love, the love practiced by the Saints. This love demands that there be no more affection for our own enjoyment and satisfaction. It requires complete mortification of our poor soul, a life of grace. All is holy in a soul that loves God alone. A person in this state loves God purely for Himself. Whatever love of creatures remains in her is animated by pure charity. She is completely dominated by grace in all her affections and dispositions. When you read the lives of the Saints, you will notice that it is this degree of love of God that animates their conduct in all its phases. Such a love demands the complete sacrifice of oneself to God.

[The Practice of Patience]

Regarding your lack of patience, I shall prescribe a long range and a short range remedy. As a long range remedy, every day make a particular examen of ten minutes on this subject and always add practical resolutions. Examine the principal circumstances in which you are more frequently
and more knowingly impatient. Examine what in you causes that impatience; you will find that it is self-love. Examine the sort of movement of self-love you have. It may be a certain sensitiveness and self-pity; your imagination is aroused; you become unyielding and stern and your mind indulges in reasonings. Make resolutions and try to remember them at the proper moment. Foresee the circumstances in which you are more likely to become impatient so as not to be caught by surprise.

As a short range remedy, as soon as your godmother speaks to you in an aggravating manner, turn your mind to God and humble yourself; distract your mind from what annoys it and be especially on your guard against saying anything about what is taking place in you. You must on such occasions keep perfect silence. If you open your mouth, your patience will escape by that door!

One important thing to remember: however just your impatience and interior irritation may seem to you, always regard it as a temptation, and you will more easily restrain yourself.

Watch carefully over yourself in regard to pride and vanity, especially in respect to knowledge you have acquired and natural qualities you may possess. Avoid acting and speaking through the impetus of self-love. For the rest, never yield to trouble, fears and anxieties when you find such tendencies in yourself. Keep a peaceful and humble watch over yourself; pray and place your confidence in God and our Lady. Remember that you are “little Marie,” the child of the great and admirable Mary. You ought to do on a small scale what she accomplished on a large one. You must especially strive to become humble like her.
III. LETTERS TO MARIE LIBERMAN

Enough for this time. Adieu, dear child. Entirely yours in the charity of Jesus and Mary.

Your uncle,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN

59

Unable to visit her, Father Libermann invites Marie to write frequently. Warning about danger of attachment to her confessor.

Letter Twelve 1845 Vol. 7, p. 199

Dear Marie [aged sixteen]:

You will be pleased with me because I am writing you first, before receiving any letter from you. Until now I have done nothing but reply. So, this time, I want to point out to you I am finally beginning to be good and reasonable in my old days. I know that you will be satisfied with me, but I have to tell you something that will cause you a little grief, perhaps even much grief, but the good Lord will console you. I see that you can guess what I have in mind. "Oh that wicked uncle is going to tell me that he is unable to visit us this year!" You’ve guessed rightly, but don’t grieve too much over it. If I don’t come this year, I shall come at some later date; it will be next year. It hurts me, dear Marie, to have to announce this delay to you and it hurts me even more personally. Have courage and do not be too distressed. Submit to God’s will. You’ll see that some fine day I shall be close to you at the Cathedral. I will say Mass for you and will have the consolation of giving you Holy Communion. I prefer to give you that bad news [of the delay of my visit] myself rather than let others tell you in a cold way.

221
I suppose you understand now why I have become so kind as to send you this letter so suddenly and unexpectedly. If I don’t have the great consolation of talking with you in the near future, at least give me the joy of writing frequently and giving me news about yourself.

[Write Frequently]

Although I do not see you, I nevertheless think very often of your soul, for I desire to help you. I know, too, that if you are so anxious to see and speak with your poor uncle, it is not merely to satisfy your heart, but you want to walk rapidly in the way of salvation. Well, dear girl, let us use a means that will help you while we are waiting for the meeting. Write me every month, and daily take a moment to examine yourself so that you will have something positive to tell me [in your letters]. Every time you have a difficulty, take note of it. At the end of the month read your notes, give me an account, and ask the advice you need.

Your sisters told me that you had mentioned the question of vocation, and that others had also spoken to you about it. The time is not yet ripe for occupying yourself with this question. Don’t think about it yet nor speak of it to any one. At your age, such reflection would only do you harm, unless the good Lord strongly impels you in that direction. I don’t believe that you would benefit by reflecting on that matter now.

[Avoid Dangerous Attachment to Confessor]

You spoke to me lately about a new confessor you had chosen. I cannot recall who it was and this makes it easier for me to give you advice regarding your conduct toward him. This advice is important. You felt sorry because your former confessor was too dry, etc. . . . This prompts me
now to offer you the following considerations. I did not think of it at the time but I have reflected on it since and I take this opportunity to pass my thoughts on to you.

You are no longer a child; you are beginning to walk in the way of perfection; you have a great desire to make progress and this makes you consult your confessor more frequently. You have a sensitive heart, a rather lively imagination and a frank and open mind. Now my advice concerns the latter propensities. If the confessor speaks unctuously, if he shows interest in you, seems to esteem you, to give special attention to your soul, if he manifests any partiality for you, any preference, you run the risk of becoming too attached to such things. You will develop too tender an affection [for him] and great evil will result. Strong attachments of this sort lead to lukewarmness and ruin piety. I need not develop this further, for I am merely advising you, so that you may take precautions.

To avoid those disadvantages, here is the way you should act, and I beg you, dear child, to observe my advice to the letter:

1. Never consult or visit your confessor in any other place than the confessional; never in his home if he is a secular priest; nor in the parlor if he is a religious.

2. Don't spend too much time in the confessional. Tell your sins, ask the advice you need, without indulging in long discourses; and never speak about any other subject than your salvation.

3. Never write to him nor seek to receive letters from him, however pious they might be.

4. Never speak about confession to others; never say anything about the things he told you in the confessional. Do not allow your mind to be occupied with your confessor, but let it be occupied with God.
5. Finally, do not seek to occupy yourself with your confessor nor to make him be particularly interested in you. Those who have a false piety do the exact opposite of what is expressed in those five points and they never attain solid virtue. They end by being empty of God, full of self-love and the desire to satisfy their spiritual sensuality; they seek only consolations which they get from their faulty behavior. They imagine that such consolations are pious and supernatural, when in reality they are purely human satisfactions.

You will probably think that your dear uncle is very severe! Well, he is because your soul is most dear to him; he is jealous of your spiritual progress, and ardently desires your sanctification.

The five points which I have mentioned are urgent. Write to me what you think and give me an account of your soul on those five points. If a hitch develops in regard to any of these points, write to me at once. You see how much importance I attach to this matter. Tell me also the name of the confessor you have chosen.

Adieu, dear niece. You know that I remain always

Your most devoted servant
in Jesus and Mary,

Father Francis Libermann
He playfully teases his niece about her disappointment.

Letter Thirteen  {1845}  Vol. 7, p. 202

Dear Little Marie [aged sixteen]:

You have probably received my little letter and, of course, it must have caused a little pain to your little heart! Oh my dear child, how much I’d like to be able to spend a few days with you. I promise to pray with all my heart and to beg our good Mother to grant us that favor, for it is solely for the well-being of your soul.

Don’t become discouraged! Don’t give in to sadness. Love God and Mary. Don’t become sad, especially because of what I said at the end of that letter. You know the sentiments that dictated it. Write to me.

I enclose a letter for Miss Augustine. Please deliver it to her. If this is not possible, put it in an envelope and address it to the Reverend Sister Anastasia Lescalier, Ergersheim, by Mosheim.

This good Sister, when she opens the envelope, will take care to forward my letter to Miss Augustine. I ordinarily do it that way. It seems that some people are wondering where those letters for the Sister with their postmark of Amiens actually come from. You know how curious people are. They might find out that those letters are destined for Miss Augustine and this would make things unpleasant.

Your poor uncle,

Father Francis Libermann
Avoid self-pity in your sadness.

Letter Fourteen

La Neuville, August 19, 1845

Vol. 7, p. 276

Dear Marie [aged sixteen]:

I am ashamed of what I must confess: I lost your last letter and so cannot reply properly to it. It arrived at the moment when I was leaving for Paris. I took it with me and left it on the table of my room in the Hotel de Strasbourg. A "naughty" servant from Saverne put my belongings and especially my papers in such good order that I have not been able to find a number of letters, and yours was one of them! So, don’t be vexed with me. It is in “Strasbourg” that the letter was lost and it is a good Alsatian—even one from Saverne—who lost it!

[How to Deal with Your Sadness]

Regarding your state of sadness, I think it is due in part to your painful situation. Do not yield to anxiety but bear your sorrows with peace and submission to God’s will; abandon your soul to Mary. From time to time recall some good thought, for example think of Our Lord in the Garden of Olives; or remain at the foot of the Cross with your holy and beloved Mother. Bear that cross of sorrow as a burden that is placed on your soul and carry it peacefully out of love for God.

Try, however, to get some diversion and distraction. Do not indulge in the dreams that might accompany your sadness. Avoid reflecting upon yourself and avoid self-pity. Never let others know that you are sad, that you are day-
dreaming and suffering. No one should know what is going on inside you; be outwardly cheerful as usual.

Be especially on your guard against putting on sad airs on purpose. Avoid drawing the attention of others to yourself. It happens sometimes when we are sad that we want others to know it and to occupy themselves with us. We don’t complain, but our tone of voice, our airs, our ways of acting proclaim our sadness. Do nothing of this kind. Be strong and try to make yourself agreeable to God alone and attract only His attention and that of our Lady.

Have patience! When your father comes here, we shall decide whether you should remain with Mrs. Halle or not. Try to come with him if possible.

I have not given up hope of coming to Strasbourg but this will be at a somewhat later date.

Adieu, dear child. Be sure that you are always very dear to me and that I am, in the charity of Jesus and Mary,

Your uncle,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN

P.S. Give the enclosed letter to Miss Augustine but in a way that her parents do not notice it. Put it in an envelope.

Everyone in Louvencourt is doing fine. You will soon hear about Caroline’s victories. Mother St. Bernard told me that Theodora has changed greatly for the better. They are very well pleased with her. They find ways to help her—she will succeed. The good Mother wants me to urge your papa to come for the profession of Sister St. Leopold in the month of Mary. Give my best regards to Mr. and Mrs. Halle. I recommend myself to their prayers.
Praise for her self-revelation regarding temptations against purity. How to deal with them.

Letter Fifteen  
La Neuville, January 19, 1847

Dear Niece [aged eighteen]:

[Don't Be Surprised That You Are Tempted]

No! I am not going to scold you because you failed to speak to me about your mental afflictions. These troubles are already hard and painful enough for one who belongs to God and wants to belong to Him forever. I prefer to sympathize with you in your tribulation rather than be displeased with you. Moreover, I understand the great sufferings of one who has such high esteem for the angelic virtue and finds her happiness in it, when she is confronted with such difficulties [as you have mentioned]. For those who love the holy virtue there is no pain on earth like that which they feel when that virtue is attacked in any way, from either near or far.

After the temptations come trouble, disquiet, interior torments and they wonder whether they had the misfortune to yield or preserved their purity intact. And when they must speak about those things, their anxiety increases, the heart beats faster, and it requires heroism to reveal their trouble.

You have performed this heroic act and repeated it. God will bless you. You will, no doubt, be very surprised when I tell you that, far from grieving because you hid your temptation from me, I am, on the contrary, truly glad of it. If you had revealed that trouble to me from the very first moment, I would not have been surprised, for your heart has not hidden nor should it keep anything hidden from me. Yet, to
see that you were so afraid to reveal your struggle to me is a sure proof that you truly abhor the object of your fears. It shows that Divine Goodness desires to preserve in your heart the precious virtue which will be your glory and will make you more and more lovable in the sight of Mary and the holy Angels.

Be courageous, dear child of Mary! Do not fear the attacks of the enemy! Avoid his approach, flee before him, but never yield to timid fears which disturb your peace of soul. Temptation is not an evil. It will teach you that the lovable virtue which Jesus placed in your heart and which Mary preserves there, is a precious treasure contained in a very frail vessel.

Hence you must not be surprised if your heart has emotions that are opposed to the virtue which you want to possess. The senses and the imagination are easily taken by surprise by the things that surround them; hence it is proper to avoid the occasions of sin so that the senses will not receive impressions that disturb the imagination. For, rest assured that your heart preserves its purity. Trouble and unruly activity take place in the imagination. Here then is what you must do:

[Rules] Regarding Yourself and Your Inner Being

1. Avoid giving in to anxiety and do not plague your mind at the approach of temptation. You merely increase the evil when you harbor worries. These make the temptation more tenacious. They cause the return of the temptation and decrease your ability to resist it with sufficient power and to remain master over your mind and its movements, because of the embarrassment which those worries leave behind.
2. Seek to distract your mind, avoid sadness, discouragement. Aim in everything at forgetting yourself and the object of your pains. Avoid in general any kind of daydreaming or imaginings. Try to preserve calm, gaiety, and openness of mind.

3. Do not entertain excessive fears of being attacked by temptation. It is understood that you must avoid everything that might expose you to those temptations and this is important; but when you cannot avoid the occasion, be not afraid, but give your heart to Jesus and Mary with full confidence and submit to the Divine Will which permits those temptations. You must have the firm determination of remaining faithful to our good Lord Jesus and to count on His help and that of Mary, our good Mother. She will not permit her dear little child to fall.

4. Have a profound, filial and constant confidence in Jesus. Put your trust in Him when you are tempted. Look gently and peacefully at Him; forget yourself and calm your inner self; distract yourself from the object of your trouble. Be confident in prayer; do not be afraid of presenting yourself to Him, but do so in all humility and as a beloved child before its loving father. Put your trust in Holy Communion. Never omit communion, whatever the state of agitation of our soul. It happens frequently in temptations of that sort that we don’t clearly see whether we have yielded or not, nor to what extent. This comes from a certain listlessness of the imagination, from a certain vacancy of mind, and sometimes from mental sadness. You then imagine that your will has failed; at least you fear it to a certain point, and this makes you timid and fearful to approach your Divine Savior. Don’t be afraid, my dear child!

You have nothing to fear! Go to Jesus with confidence, humility, and love. Present yourself to Him like a weak and
III. LETTERS TO MARIE LIBERMANN

crue and strengthen you. Open your heart to Him that He may seize it and become its absolute master. Tell Him that you want your heart to be wholly His, that you have given it to Him, that you ask Him to exercise full control over it so that He may live in it as a soul lives in the body; that He may reign in it as a king on his throne; that He may rest in it as He rested in the poor little crib. He does indeed find a poor crib in you, a crib truly poor and empty, but since He has chosen it for His place of rest, ask Him to keep it and to become its glorious treasure.

Do not fear! Jesus will preserve the purity of the small tabernacle which He has chosen for Himself. Mary will adorn that poor hovel; she will fix it up and make it worthy to serve as a cradle for the Divine Child. Have courage! Be patient with yourself. Jesus loves you, I can assure you of that! In your suffering you have great need of Holy Communion. One of the first graces that Jesus communicates through it, is the strength against temptations of the flesh whose power He weakens. Go then with confidence to Him and never omit Holy Communion.

[Rules for External Conduct]

Concerning your external conduct in regard to those temptations, it is clear that you cannot avoid all occasions. Proceed with caution, but also with calm and trust in God. Watch over your eyes. Guard both your behavior and your words. Do everything with modesty but without affectation. Let no one ever notice that your soul undergoes anxiety. Don’t be pensive, but gay as usual. Speak as you normally do in your habitual easy way. Be modest, but do not let others notice your reserve when you have to reply directly to a young man.

231
Avoid showing outward embarrassment in your way of acting, your speech, and your bearing. To do this, you must exercise control over your mind and preserve calm in your soul. Distract your mind, diverting attention from yourself, from your temptation and inner troubles. As usual, in the course of the day, make ejaculations to Jesus and to Mary and you will obtain that calm of which I have spoken. Have courage—this storm will come to an end.

[Docility and Patience]

I have just found your second last letter under a heap of papers! It was still unopened just as you had sent it. I read there about your old miseries which are now forgotten and which have been replaced by more recent ones. All that is nothing! God wants you. He has taken you. He will guard you. You will belong to Him and He will not let you go. Be brave again! The good Lord makes you pass from tribulation to tribulation, desiring to mold you. Be supple, docile, and faithful.

You will benefit by the scoldings of your good mother who, in spite of all, loves you dearly. You will perhaps profit just as much from the excellent lessons which your dear father gives you—they are truly precious for you.

You seem to despair of seeing me in the near future. And yet you are wanted here, you are expected somewhere here in Amiens. They ask me: "When is Marie coming? Dear Father, make her come!" And who said this to me? You know! Have courage, have confidence in Jesus and Mary, and all will go well.

(No signature)
Progress in the spiritual life of her brother and sister.

Letter Sixteen  
Amiens, June 25, 1847  
Vol. 9, p. 206

Dear Marie:

It is your good mother who will deliver this letter to you. The moment of departure has finally arrived. Theodora, who was so happy the day before yesterday, now looks dreamy.

Your mother has been so happy during her whole stay with us! I found that she had changed considerably in regard to her spiritual condition. She is quite different from what she was when I visited Strasbourg. She is a saintly woman who loves the good Lord with her whole soul, all her heart and all her strength. She already loved Him and perhaps as much then as now, but she was not as detached from the world as at present. I assure you that she has surprised, edified and charmed me. Her health was good while she was here. Let us hope that the good Lord will keep her with us.

One word about Theodora. Your mother worried somewhat but there was really no reason whatever for it. Theodora is very good. She has an excellent heart, is full of faith and well-disposed. She has tact and good judgment. Your mother imagined that Theodora did not love her and this caused the poor girl much sorrow. This good child, though full of emotions, does not like to manifest them. She is not effusive. In this she is a little like your father. Her heartfelt feelings reveal themselves only in her eyes, or in a slight caress that is not very expressive in itself but nonetheless full of tenderness for anyone who knows her.

Your mother, on the contrary, is very effusive and expects something more than that. But if Theodora were to act in
this way, it would appear in her as affectation. Now Theodora is very tactful and has a distaste for everything that is affected. She remains simple and does well when she acts that way. Her greatest fault, to my knowledge, is her impatience and I think that it will take her a long time to overcome it. So when her mother said or did something that annoyed her, she sometimes reacted with impatience, but the very next moment she was sorry for it.

I have no worries at all about her. Her character is very good in spite of her faults. She should be approached affectionately, and then you get all you want from her. Tell your father that when he writes he ought not to scold her. We should, on the contrary, always encourage her and always win her through affection. Assure him also that this good child will develop properly.

And now I should like to say a word about your own soul but people are talking all around me! I am writing at the place where your mother has been staying, an hour before her departure. So I'll content myself with praying for you—yes, you may count on my prayers. Have courage and confidence in God. Say hello for me to Henry, Eugene, and Leo. I've asked your mother to kiss them for me.

One word regarding Miss Eckert. She has finally secured a place. I believe that she will be able to discard her prejudices and overcome her difficulties. It is time for me to end this letter!

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

Your uncle,

Francis Libermann
III. LETTERS TO MARIE LIBERMANN

Live in union with Mary. Urge your parents to be patient and gentle with each other. Bear your temptations with patience.

Letter Seventeen  

Notre Dame du Gard, August 28, 1847

Poor Marie:

It is about time to reply to your undated letter. Whenever I think of you I suffer somewhat because I say to myself, "That dear neglected soul must be thinking that we don't bother about her and her poor heart must be sad." But my pain is not great and I am consoled when I reflect that, in your sorrows, you will raise your mind to Mary and rest on her Heart. I am sure that you thus dispel the clouds and that your heart is comforted and feels renewed power and virtue, because you are more faithful and better than ever.

[Live in Union with Mary]

Yes, my dear child, always be good and lovable in the presence of God and His holy Angels. Live habitually with Mary, who is so great, holy, powerful and lovable. Then "little Marie" will be with the great Mary, a child with her mother, and she will resemble her not merely in name but in fact. She will resemble her by purity of heart, mildness, charity, humility, modesty, heavenly wisdom, self-abnegation. Be a good pupil, a good child of Mary, and your progress is assured.

You may be sure that I pray for you constantly. I put my trust in Jesus and Mary and am convinced that grace will fill your soul. Have courage, patience and confidence. Always regard your soul as belonging to God. Live in peace.
God is with you. Mary leads you, carrying you like a little child, like a poor little sister of her Child, Jesus. Don’t yield to impatience; don’t give in to anxiety. Be faithful to your rule of life. Be faithful to your communions. Approach the Holy Eucharist with peace, calm and confidence. Try always to keep your conscience in peace and at ease. Always preserve the freedom of the children of God. Serve God as a well-beloved child must act toward her Father.

[Urge Your Parents to Be Patient and Gentle with Each Other]

Regarding your good mother, show her that those ugly thoughts have no substance, that she herself puts no faith in them, that she ought to consider them as temptations, as crosses which God leaves with her to enable her to purify her soul; that she should try to profit by those pains for her own sanctification, bearing them with calm, patience, and submission to God’s will.

Show her that she must watch carefully over herself and avoid grieving your father; that God wants her to refrain from giving outward expression to those mental pains and temptations. Encourage her in the practice of that virtue. When she manifests something of that kind, urge your father to treat her with gentleness and patience and to aid her by his counsels. Make him see that God has given him a more enlightened mind and more substantial graces to enable him to support and guide your beloved mother in her trials. Point out to him that she suffers greatly because she has those ideas and that, deep down in her soul and conscience, she does not really believe in them. But she has a lively imagination and, when those ideas affect her, she does not have the power to overcome them. She needs help in those moments; she needs to be led with gentleness. Let him then
III. LETTERS TO MARIE LIBERMAN

forget the things that might appear insulting and try to con-
sole your mother and teach her how to profit from her
suffering.

[Be Patient in Your Temptations]

Poor Marie! How much you are tried by Divine Good-
ness! Have courage! Love and be faithful! God will
sanctify you.

You have temptations; you realize that at your age there
are struggles. It is a grace to realize this, but I don't worry
about it. God loves you. He is with you. March on with
courage and perseverance; you will triumph! Do not be pre-
occupied with yourself except in the presence of God. The
petty thoughts of vanity which arise in your mind ought
not to surprise or trouble you. They will serve to counter-
balance pride. If you did not experience all these petty and
foolish ideas of vanity, I would be afraid that pride might
harm you; but now I am not afraid. Remain in your low-
liness before God and give free rein to divine grace; grace is
powerful! Be faithful and full of gratitude.

Adieu, dear Marie. May the peace and the blessing of God
be with you.

Your uncle,

FRANCIS LIBERMAN

priest of the Holy Heart of Mary
Concerning her possible vocation to religious life. Try to be joyful.

Letter Eighteen  Amiens, December 21, 1847  Vol. 9, p. 385

Dear Marie:

It is about time I replied to your letter of September 20th. I do this with joy, but it would give me even greater satisfaction if I did not remember that I have made you wait three long months! Remorse is a mean companion—it hurts. But you realize that if I didn’t love you, as I must love my dear niece, I would not be suffering now for not having replied to your letter. Take consolation in that, poor neglected child. I must tell you, however, that I didn’t write because I wanted first to talk to Mother Saint Bernard about you, and this good Mother has been absent.

[Regarding Her Possible Vocation]

Here is why I wanted to speak to her first. Not long after I received your letter of September 20th, I had the occasion of meeting Father de Brandt. He spoke to me about your sisters and said many nice things about them—even about Theodora who was then sometimes full of pranks. He was of the same opinion as the Sisters of Louvencourt (which coincides with mine) that this child will certainly turn out well like her other sisters, and that there is no reason for worrying about her.

He then said to me: “How are things going with Miss Marie? Does she want to continue living in uncertainty about her future?” I asked him: “What do you think of Marie?” He replied: “I think that God wants her to be a religious and that she ought to fulfill God’s designs as soon
as possible; that her parents are doing her great harm by opposing that plan. Now is the most propitious time. If she remains much longer in the world, her character will be spoiled, she will acquire worldly habits and she may find it difficult at a later date to adjust herself to life in a religious community." I don't recall what I replied to those words but I thought that he was right and agreed with him.

Because my opinion coincided with his, I spoke along the same lines. I saw no serious difficulty standing in the way except the one presented, quite naturally, by your parents who do not think it certain that you have a vocation. They find it hard to deprive themselves of your presence and send you so far away when they are not certain that you will be where God wants you.

I explained this difficulty to Father de Brandt, adding that I saw a way of solving it. Here it is: Father de Brandt thinks that you will join the community of the religious of Louvencourt. Providence seems to guide you quite naturally in that direction. Your tastes and character will also push you toward them, once you have decided to enter that convent. Mother Saint Bernard also considers you as her spiritual daughter.

That is why I have proposed that you take a middle course, which will satisfy your dear parents as much as possible and at the same time avoid all difficulties. You could come to Louvencourt to finish your education and this, as you realize, would only be to your advantage. It could not do you any harm. If, later, you see that you have a vocation, all will be ready for you to follow. If, on the contrary, you see clearly that God does not call you to the religious life, you will have benefited by the time spent at Louvencourt and the Sisters will, in any case, be happy to have done good to you.
Father de Brandt was well pleased with this plan. I was waiting till Mother Saint Bernard returned, so I could propose it to her before writing to you. Since Mother Saint Bernard agrees with that plan, you have now merely to pray and examine this project in the presence of God.

I am happy to report the above conversation, on which you will be able to meditate and reflect, and you will then tell me about your reactions.

[Try to be Joyful—Trust in God]

Always pour out your mind and heart to me when you write. Always describe to me all your difficulties. Don't be afraid thinking that I am too busy. I shall always have time to reply to you. This time I have been slow to reply, because I wanted to speak to Mother Saint Bernard and I did not know that she was going to be away for such a length of time.

Try to be somewhat gayer and to remain full of confidence at all times. When you feel sad, raise your heart to Mary. Receive communion frequently, preparing yourself for it by the desire of suffering everything for the love of God.

Don't worry about all those thoughts that flit through your mind. God knows your heart. Give it entirely to Him and don't worry if your imagination wants to remain on earth. Belong to God and bear the pricks of your foolish imagination with patience, gentleness, humility, and trust in God. Don't be surprised when you have distractions in your prayers. Be content with raising your heart to God and making some acts of love, humility, sacrifice, and submission in all things to His good pleasure. But make these acts rather with the heart than with the mind, and don't worry about the rest.

Adieu, dear Marie. Always remember that you are the "little Marie," daughter of the "great Mary," Queen of the
III. LETTERS TO MARIE LIBERMANNN

Angels and Mother of the God of glory. Have confidence, therefore. Be full of perfect confidence!

Your uncle,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANNN

66

He will personally visit her.

Letter Nineteen    Paris, January 22, 1851    Vol. 13, p. 16

Dear Marie:

I have sinned by suspecting that you were not clever in business transactions. I owe you an apology, but my fault is so great that making amends by letter will not suffice. For my penance I must go to Strasbourg and express my sorrow in person. This I intend to do in the near future. I think I shall come during or rather at the end of next week. I shall only stay two or three days with you.

So you were right in not tiring yourself too much by writing me a letter of direction. We shall discuss everything in person.

Thank Mr. and Mrs. Halle in my name for the service they want to render our bursar by offering him a loan on a promissory note. Money has recently come in and our bursar is no longer in trouble. The other matters we shall deal with in our coming interview.

Your devoted uncle,

FRANCIS LIBERMANNN, Superior
Worries about her brother's conduct. How to deal with him when he comes home.

Letter Twenty  Paris, July 19, 1851  Vol. 13, p. 239

Dear Marie:

I am ready to send [your brother] Henry away on his journey and, as time passes, I am more and more convinced that his stay in Paris would be ruinous for him. Henry is a good boy, full of faith, but he is childish in many ways. His character, his easygoingness, his lightheadedness, his desire to show off and pass himself off as a man of importance, his imper turbable selfconfidence—all these things would expose him to the greatest dangers if he were to remain in the city. I know that those dangers exist because of certain things that have happened. They are not at all serious, at least as far as I know, and yet they enable me to realize what we would have to fear from his stay in Paris. Henry needs to be guided with firmness, kindness, and reason. We must avoid showing him ill temper, but also occasional weakness. We should not reprove him about insignificant faults. It is well to save our remonstrances for more important things.

We must pay particular attention to his character and the inclinations of his heart, and when he commits faults that are related to these, we must reprove him with gravity, and with reason, that is, we must show him why they are evil. We should approach Henry "through the heart," arousing noble sentiments in him. We must neither humble nor hurt him, especially when it is unnecessary. I can see that he is afraid of being treated as a child, to be chided, to be handled roughly. This we must avoid. Nevertheless we must not deal with him wholly as if he were a grownup. We must use our
authority, with a good mixture of mildness and firmness, without hurting his self-love by harsh words.

Henry needs to be carefully watched, but we must not show him distrust, for this would make him resort to dissimulation and would corrupt his true feelings. He already lacks openness, and is afraid that other people distrust him. This thought—that others distrust him—is bad for him.

Moreover, it causes me to fear that something wrong has occurred; however, there is no proof of it. He has adopted habits of the Latin Quarter in his way of acting and speaking; we must be on the watch. Henry considers those manners wonderful and is inclined to feel important because of his devil-may-care attitude and his independence of speech.

See to it that he does not suspect that I secretly gave you details about his conduct. It is enough to tell him that I have expressed some concern in general because of his fickleness, his lack of experience and his easygoing ways. But it is better that you say no more.

I have tried to find out whether he goes to Mass on Sundays. It seems that he went regularly, except perhaps on one occasion, though this is not certain. Father Freppel told me that he was satisfied with Henry and that he went to confession—so my last worries had no solid foundation. There is also the question of his going to communion, for if he fails to go to communion it must be for unfortunate reasons. This is an extremely delicate matter and you may not mention it in any circumstances. I have considered that this was the reason why he stayed away from chapel service at the seminary, fearing it would be noticed that he was not going to Holy Communion. This is why I did not insist on his coming to us.

(No signature)
Remain with Mary at the foot of the Cross. Crosses sanctify the soul.

Letter Twenty One  Paris, November 18, 1851  Vol. 13, p. 375

Dear Marie:

[Remain with Mary at the Foot of the Cross]

I see clearly that the good Lord wishes to keep you at the foot of the Cross with Mary, your good, lovable, holy, and happy Mother. What then should you do? You must stay with her—and there is no better place for us in this world than at the foot of the Cross!

Your crosses resemble those of Mary. She suffered in her heart; you suffer similarly; she suffered because of the pains of her well-beloved Son; you suffer on account of those of your beloved parents. The only difference is in the greatness and intensity of the sufferings. See to it that there be no other difference in the manner of bearing your suffering than that of the degree of holiness and perfection with which Mary bore her sorrows. Do your best to imitate her as much as is possible for a weak creature to approach the mighty Mother of God.

Mary was good and always remained good even in her sufferings. Act likewise and remain good and mild in the midst of your pains and anguish. Avoid bad temper, capriciousness and the other faults which we naturally commit when we fail to bear properly the pains which God deigns to send us. Be friendly towards all and let no one suffer anything from you on account of what you yourself have to suffer. Preserve serenity of mind so that you may also retain friendliness in the midst of your trials. Avoid sadness, or
III. LETTERS TO MARIE LIBERMAN

suffer it calmly and peacefully. Suffer in a holy manner, and you will enjoy that calm and serenity.

[Crosses Sanctify the Soul]

Nothing is more sanctifying than crosses. Remain constantly in your abjectness before God and tell Him, a thousand times a day if necessary, "Thy will be done." In those painful moments, abandon yourself completely into God's hands. Give yourself to Him as a victim that is immolated in holocaust, that is burned and consumed for His glory in the flame of His Divine Love and in conformity with His adorable Will. What, after all, is a poor creature when he stands before God? What can a poor creature offer Him that could truly please Him, especially a sinful creature as we all are?

There is but one thing we can do, namely, to allow ourselves to be immolated for the honor of His holy and adorable Will. This is the only sacrifice that satisfies a soul that is devoted to God. Whatever is not a sacrifice leaves in us the impression that we have done nothing, that we have not given anything to God. Suffer then in that spirit and you will be happy, even in this world, as Mary was happy in the midst of her greatest sorrows.

In regard to your temptations, I have nothing new to tell you. Don't be afraid; they have no importance. Continue to go to communion as you customarily do. In your frequent communions you will find the strength needed to resist temptations. When you are thus united to Jesus, cultivate those thoughts of sacrifice and the other dispositions of which I have spoken. Give yourself to Jesus in that spirit.

I am glad to have been able to do my share in getting your poor parents out of their [financial] trouble. I fear, of course, that my five hundred francs will be lost, and I could not have
loaned that sum in good conscience had I foreseen that it would be lost, that is, that it would not be paid back. And yet I have not yet lost hope that it will be returned. But don’t worry about that!

I shall see if I can find a place for Theodora. I don’t really know whom I ought to approach. Pray for that intention.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

Father Francis Libermann

P. S. I had begun this letter and was putting the finishing touches to it when I received yours of the sixteenth. Our poor bursar’s money-box is literally empty at this moment. I regret that I cannot help you and your godmother out of your little difficulty.
IV. LETTER TO MADAME PERCHAIS

IV. LETTER TO MADAME PERCHAIS

A reply to a mother whose son had recently joined the Venerable’s novitiate to devote himself to apostolic labor.

69

A mother shares in the sacrifice of her son as Mary shared in that of Jesus.

La Neuville, June 14, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 238

Dear Mrs. Perchais:

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the sentiments you have expressed in your letter of the fifth of this month. I shall pray to God for you with all earnestness. It is my hope that Divine Goodness will reward you for the sacrifice you have made to Him of what, in this world, is dearest to the heart of a mother.

Unite your heart to the most Holy Heart of Mary, who sacrificed her own beloved Son and thus helped to bring salvation to the entire world. What zeal, generosity, and love her Heart put in that sacrifice! In spite of the inestimable price it cost her, she made that offering with a love and a zeal that is beyond our comprehension.

You will not share in the salvation of the entire world, as Mary did, but you will have a share in the salvation of the souls which Divine Mercy will commit to your son. You see, then, what glory is already given to the most loving Heart of Mary; you see how many souls Our Lord saves through her prayer and petitions. Why? Because Mary participated in the sacrifice of Jesus and this called for a share in the salvation of the world and a share in the glory which Jesus won through His sorrowful sacrifice. All this should
serve to encourage you, dear Madam, and make you realize how great God’s mercy is toward you and your son, to whom He has given an apostolic vocation. Rejoice then. Love, praise, and bless the Lord of goodness for the heavenly favor He grants you. Give thanks to Mary.

Your most humble servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
V. LETTERS TO MISS ROUILLARD

Miss Rouillard, together with other pious ladies, contributed to the support of Father Libermann's missions. Around the time of his letters to her she had lost the power of hearing.

70

Union in charity. The blessings of deafness.

Letter One {1844} Vol. 6, p. 291

Dear Miss Rouillard:

Since you want me to send you a little word of consolation, I shall do so, although I am still somewhat ill.

I am very grateful to you and to all the other good persons who are giving their help for the good of the Missions.

I am glad to learn that a sincere reconciliation has taken place between you and the other pious persons. The enemy of salvation is always seeking to arouse discord among those who are gathered in divine charity. God receives great glory when that wretched enemy is overcome. Our good Master loves union and charity; He has triumphed in your souls; may His Holy Name be blessed! I beg Him to preserve that holy charity in your hearts.

It is not an evil to be deprived of the power to hear the conversations of men. Listen peacefully to the Divine Spirit who speaks in the depths of your heart; His word will be so much more powerful in you because Divine Goodness deprives you of the power to hear the words of men. The words of men are often an obstacle to souls that desire to listen to the voice of God speaking inside them. Rejoice, therefore, and submit lovingly to all that God wants to inflict
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

upon you; your loss may prove a spiritual gain for your own sanctification. Deafness enables one to avoid a great number of faults.

Your most humble servant,

FRANCIS F. LIBERMANN

71

The Value of Suffering in and for Christ.

Letter Two September 17, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 346

Dear Miss Rouillard:

I pray to our good Master that He himself may be your consolation. Suffer peacefully the pains which Divine Mercy sends you. It is a great happiness for a Christian soul to be able to suffer in this world. Whatever the nature of the pains which Jesus in His divine goodness sends you whether they be interior or exterior—they are always of priceless value for our souls. The good Lord deals with us with a goodness and sweetness that is admirable. He gives us sufferings in order that our souls may detach themselves from the earth, from the pleasures and satisfactions of nature, so that we may cling to Him alone.

It is quite true that a good Christian soul is not attached to forbidden pleasures; but one might crave too much those that are lawful and a soul might thus be less strongly attached to Our Lord, who wants to be the only lord of our little heart. Be fully subject to the Divine Will—suffer with humility and love all that He sends you; it is not you who are suffering, but Jesus, the Heart of Jesus, which is the love of all hearts. He is in you and suffers with you; abandon
V. LETTERS TO MISS ROUILLARD

your soul to Him; His divine grace is there; it will render your sufferings very profitable for the sanctification of your soul. Remain prostrate at the feet of the Divine Master; surrender your body and soul to Him alone. Live only for His Divine Will; preserve peace in the midst of your pains. Jesus is in you; what more can you desire? And if you suffer, it is in Jesus crucified who is in you. Oh! How happy is the soul which possesses Jesus crucified within it! It possesses the treasure of all graces and the source of all love and holiness. You are a thousand times blessed because you are able to suffer with Jesus and the peace of Jesus.

Your humble servant,

Francis Libermann
priest of the Holy Heart of Mary
VI. LETTERS TO MRS. ARRAGON

Mrs. Arragon, widow, was the mother of Father Stanislas—Auguste Arragon, who had joined the Venerable’s congregation in 1843. Two years later, he sailed for the mission of Haiti. When he and his companions had to leave a few weeks after their arrival, Libermann sent him to new missions of West Africa.

He sympathises with her in her sacrifice and points out how she shares in the sacrifice of Mary.

Letter One  La Neuville, November 17, 1844  Vol. 6, p. 452

Dear Mrs. Arragon:

Please pardon me for not answering to your letter sooner; I really had no time to do so.

I have wholeheartedly joined in sharing the sorrow which God in His wisdom has desired to send you. I beg Him to give you the necessary strength to bear it with perfect resignation. Our earthly life is but a passage, during which we must prepare ourselves for eternal blessedness. This is why God in His mercy deigns to try us who are still wandering in this world, enabling us to acquire greater merit.

I give your Reverend son permission to remain with you for eight more days. I would like to please you by prolonging his stay with you even more, but we need him greatly here and, besides, I would be doing harm to our community if I permitted him to remain much longer. Our heavenly Father would disapprove it. So, dear Madame, I beg you, do us the favor of returning him to us after one month of absence from us, and I will be very grateful to you.
VI. LETTERS TO MRS. ARRAGON

I will pray with all my heart for the salvation and sanctification of your soul. Our Lord Jesus Christ will never forget the wonderful sacrifice you are making to God in giving us your dear son. A mother suffers intensely when she has to part company with her son. I assure you that I myself feel that sorrow very deeply, but I take comfort in the thought of the merit which your sacrifice will bring you for all eternity.

Those words might sound strange to you, dear Madame. You might imagine that I am not really grieving at the sight of your son’s departure, but I assure you that this is not so. I do not have the honor of knowing you personally, but this is a sorrow which I share with all mothers who undergo that sort of trial. I suffer most keenly because I reflect that I am the occasion of their pain. It pains me infinitely because I am the cause of bringing torment to maternal love; but I am also comforted in the thought that God will greatly reward all such mothers, for I realize that they are offering a sacrifice to God that resembles the one which Mary offered on Calvary. Great are the fruits of such a sacrifice! All the souls who will be won by your son will be like so many precious stones in your crown. How great the joy of the Christian soul who contributes to the crown of the apostles, because of the enormous sacrifice made for the salvation of souls.

I earnestly recommend myself to you in your good prayers and promise not to forget you in mine. This I consider to be my duty so that your sacrifice may be profitable for the salvation of your soul.

Respectfully yours,

Your humble servant,

Francis Libermann,

priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

253
Dear Mrs. Arragon:

I have just received a letter which your daughter Annette sent me in your name. This letter has filled me with consolation; for it shows me the pious sentiments that grace the family of my dear confrere, Father Auguste Arragon. As the mother of one of our missionaries, you have a right to whatever spiritual consolation I can offer you in place of your son. But it is a double pleasure for me when I see the Christian sentiments that animate your family. Hence it is with the greatest satisfaction that I reply to the questions you address to me, and I ask you to write me every time you feel the need of doing so.

[Reassurance About Her Son]

Have no worries about the state of your son's health. He has suffered in Goree of the same indisposition which afflicted him every year at St. Sulpice and at La Neuville; it is no more than a general feeling of discomfort which lasts a few days and afterwards leaves no trace. Goree is very healthful; people go there to recover from the illnesses they may have contracted in less wholesome climes. Father Arragon will probably remain in Goree or nearby in one of the healthful sections where, I think, we shall build a house, and it is only during the good seasons that he will travel through the neighboring, less salubrious sections. Knowing how little attention he pays to his health, I have most strongly urged him to take care of himself and have ordered his confreres to watch over him. Once he is accustomed to that climate, he will be more prudent.
VI. LETTERS TO MRS. ARRAGON

Up to now, Father Arragon has not done much in that country; he first had to get acclimatized and to learn the language. He has a great facility for languages. The one that is spoken in and around Goree is one of the most difficult of all the languages of the African coasts. Father Arragon applies himself to that study with his customary zeal and has already made great progress in it.

I found myself obliged to send him to Goree during the worst season. At Goree itself there was no danger, since he would suffer from nothing worse than great heat. I feared, however, that he might commit imprudences by going to unhealthy sectors and this I would not have allowed him to do; but he was so impatient to go to the mission, he was so depressed, so discouraged, and full of fear that he would not be able to leave immediately, that I was afraid there might be greater harm in keeping him here than in sending him away at that time. I took all possible precautions to prevent him from going to unwholesome parts, and he has been faithful to my orders. He is presently in the good season, which began in November, and all the missionaries are very well. They will have the opportunity to get acclimated before the return of the bad weather and will no longer run any risks. Harm could come to them only through some imprudence they might commit.

[Mission News]

The resources of the missionaries depend exclusively on what they receive from the Propagation of the Faith. Until now, nothing has been denied our missionaries. They still had a considerable sum at their disposal and this kept them going until November. When they send me word that they want to borrow money from me, I will advance it to them in expectation of the sums which the Propagation will provide. So, Madame, be at your ease; your son will not be wanting
in the necessaries. He who feeds the birds of the fields will not abandon the servants who sacrifice themselves for His glory.

However, if you deem it proper to make some small sacrifice for the benefit of your son, from time to time, you may do so, and this would be pleasing to God, like any other good work.

The companions of Father Arragon are Fathers Briot, Bessieux, Lossedat and Warlop. The sixth, Father Tisserant, who was to be the head of the Mission, died recently in a shipwreck near the coast of Morocco. He was on his way to Goree and the vessel on which he was a passenger was destined for a mission to be fulfilled at Mogadore where it had to bring the Consul; it was afterwards to land at Goree. The loss of that excellent missionary was most painful for us. I hope to find some one to take his place very soon. I use this opportunity to invite you to send me your dispatches for your son within a month; I shall forward them for you.

The Propagation of the Faith has not spoken about us until now, because we have had nothing but misfortune in Guinea, and you know what has happened in Haiti.

I see no inconvenience in your sending the letters of your son to the Propagation; however, I think that they will not be incorporated in the *Annals*, because the mission of Haiti is suspended for the time being; however you are always permitted to send them.

I recommend to your prayers our house and also the Mission of Guinea. Do not worry, Madame, about the prosperity of our society. Pray for us and especially for the Mission of Guinea in which you have your share. We are very numerous and have scarcely room for all.

Your most humble and devoted servant,

Francis Libermann
Priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

256
VI. LETTERS TO MRS. ARRAGON

A missionary must expect some privations. Reason for his silence. News about her son and the mission.

Letter Three undated {1847} Vol. 9, p. 117

Madame:

[Some Privations Are to Be Expected in Missionary Life]

I understand perfectly and cannot blame your solicitude for our dear missionary. Nevertheless, we should not forget that he is a missionary and a missionary for the Negroes. Hence we must expect that he will suffer some privations, but the good Lord, as well as our good Mother, will know how to lighten his burden without diminishing its value or its merits.

Your relative, the good Jesuit, and his companions may have arrived unexpectedly at Dakar, and if the omelet was good and big enough, if the fish had decent proportions and size, they will have enjoyed a dinner that was sufficiently good for missionaries. Perhaps they will not always meet with better fare at Maduré. In any case the most recent letters of Father Arragon himself and of some others of his confreres do not speak of famine.

In regard to the house, it must have been finished a long time ago; and even before it was completely in order, it served to protect those who lived in it in such a way that they would not have to suffer from the climate. So, there is no need to be excited. Nothing compels us to say that the health of any one of the missionaries has suffered from that state of affairs. The house of Dakar seems to us to be a rather healthy dwelling, so much so that it can be used to house the missionaries while they become acclimated to the vast country to which they are sent. That house is eighty or
ninety feet long by thirty-six in width. It is, no doubt, the
nicest house in that country. That is why it will become the
episcopal palace for our first bishop, Monseigneur Truffet,
who has just left with six companions: three priests, one
subdeacon and two catechists. He will have to establish his
cathedral there and his Junior Seminary as well.

[News About Her Son and the Mission]

You see that the good Lord seems to have merciful designs
for those poor people who until now have been so very
neglected. You will readily forgive your excellent son for
not writing more frequently to you and for not entering into
long details, when you know that, beside his journeys and
other works of zeal in the apostolate, he has often been ab-
sorbed in the difficult study of the native language. The
latter is of course an indispensable tool; it is also most effi-
cacious in the work of doing good to and converting the
population. He has told us himself that he had not found
that language as difficult as he had expected. This may be
a proof of his special aptitude, of his application, and also of
God's protection over him. We expect to receive more and
more interesting news regarding that country, and we shall
consider it our duty to forward such news to you at the
proper time and place if your dear son does not give you
sufficient information.

I have gratefully received the help you desire us to send
him. And yet I beg you to feel reassured regarding his condi-
tion. He will in no way be different from others. If you want
to write directly to him, it is sufficient to write via Bordeaux,
Le Havre, or Marseille; these are the three principal ports
from which vessels leave for those countries. Soleiman [the
local king] has not yet been baptized, from what I learn
through the last letters. We are hoping that the arrival of
a bishop and the stable establishment of the Mission will

258
produce a good effect; and yet, we should wait patiently for
the workings of grace and the time which Divine Providence
has in mind, trying only to hasten them as much as possible
by the ardor of our desires and our prayers.

It will be of interest to you to learn that our community
has at least doubled since last year. We have had to buy a
second house and have at present, beside all those that have
already left, about fifty subjects who are preparing to leave
in the relatively near future. Please help us with your
prayers that we may faithfully correspond with God’s designs
concerning us.

I am truly sorry that I did not see your dear Visitandine
Sister at Annecy. I think it is because it had been suggested
to me that she was absent from that city which caused me to
forget to ask for her. I beg you to excuse me. Yes, it is I
indeed who celebrated that Holy Mass of which she spoke.
It was not by forgetfulness either, that on my return jour-
ney, I was unable to stop near Grenoble, but I had to go to
Amiens to see my growing religious family which I had not
seen for more than five months. I hope I shall be luckier the
next time I am in those parts.

I will do my best to compensate for all that by whole-
heartedly giving you the share you have asked for in my
feeble prayers. You are perfectly entitled to it and the devout
sentiments that accompanied your request cannot fail to be
most pleasing to Our Good Lord.

I am truly grateful to you, Madame, and to your whole
family, for the sentiments you have deigned to express and
I beg you to believe in the sincerity of my own, with which
I remain,

Your humble and respectful servant in Jesus Christ,

Francis Libermann,
Superior of the Missionaries
of the Holy Heart of Mary

259
VII. LETTER TO MADAME BLANPIN

Mrs. Blanpin was a widow, rather well to do and painfully scrupulous. She came in contact with Father Libermann when her son Charles entered his novitiate. The Venerable did his best to restore her peace of soul and to guide her in her spiritual life. Her scruples, however, persisted and, when her son was stricken with a disease of the throat which caused him to lose his voice and forced him to return from the missions, she blamed her sins for this misfortune.

In the present letter Father Libermann once again sought to dispel her anxieties and predicted that her son would be cured. This is precisely what happened, and Libermann considered this cure to be truly miraculous.¹

Libermann expresses his certainty that her sins are forgiven. Love, not fear, should govern our relationship with God.

La Neuville, October 12, 1846

Dear Mrs. Blanpin:

[Your Sins AreForgiven]

I have prayed and will continue to pray according to your wishes. But after all my prayers past and present and after much reflection, I can only find words of consolation and peace for you. Be without fear and anxiety! God is with you. Your soul is in the state of grace and your past sins are forgiven. This I tell you with all the assurance which faith can give us in such matters.

I tell you truthfully—and in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ—that in no other case have I felt a more complete assurance about sins having been forgiven than in your case regarding the sins that have caused you so much trouble and grief.

I shall say more. If an angel of heaven appeared in all his celestial splendor and told me in God's name that your sins have been forgiven, I could not thereby have greater certitude than I have now; however great the assurance of a supernatural revelation in which all the rules for such a revelation are fulfilled, it could never warrant such a great certainty as the one I actually have regarding the remission of those sins.

For my certitude rests in part on the infallible rules of the Catholic faith, rules which no one may reject except heretics, and in part on principles that are unanimously accepted by all theologians.

However much I examine and approach from every angle all that concerns your state of soul, I am unable to find any thing that can cast the least doubt on the remission of those sins. There is left only the uncertainty that remains generally in the case of the greatest saints regarding the remission of their sins; for you know, following the words of St. Paul, that we cannot judge with absolute certainty whether we are worthy of love or of hatred.

But, I repeat once more, your particular case gives no basis for the least doubt nor a motive for the smallest anxiety. I cannot think of any greater assurance in this world than that of a revelation that is approved by the Church and is declared to be an article of faith, such as that which was made to David in similar circumstances. Don't think now that I am exaggerating in order to hearten and reassure you. I say these things only after careful examination and analysis in accord with all the rigorous and exact principles that are universally
accepted in the Church. This is the truth, and I proclaim it in the presence of our Divine Master and from the depths of my conscience.

[Live Without Fear in the Love of God]

I trust, therefore, that my words will give you the assurance, peace of soul and courage, that will make you persevere with fervor and fidelity in the way of God. I can also assure you that you are in the way of salvation. I can say more: you are in the way of perfection, and the enemy is causing you all that trouble in order to arrest your progress in the sanctification of your soul. Give a deaf ear to the spirit whom God has condemned for all eternity. Fill your mind with confidence and your heart with love, and cast out fear and anxiety. God dwells in your soul. You belong to Him, and I am joyfully and firmly confident that you will always continue to advance on that road.

Don’t worry because you did not give me a complete account of those sins. You know that you were not obliged to give all those details, since all were already absolved. What you did not say to your confessor, you have told me in your letter, and it is after reading and examining your letter, and after praying to God, that I speak to you with so much assurance. You may therefore be perfectly at ease for there remains no reason for harboring the least anxiety for the future.

I repeat what your former confessor already told you: from now on, never confess again nor speak further about those sins. You must forget them entirely and reject every thought that causes you trouble or concern; you must reject such thoughts as temptations that stand in the way of firm progress in perfection.

Live in peace and joy! Be full of happiness and consolation because you have been able to offer to God a worthy sac-
VII. LETTER TO MADAME BLANPIN

rifice in giving him your beloved son. Suffer lovingly the
trial which Divine Goodness permits your son to pass through
for his sanctification. Have no worries about that subject.
In due time that same Divine Goodness which now sends
him illness will know how to favor him with a cure.

You wrongly imagine that your son’s trial is due to your
own sins. To believe such a thing would be an insult to God;
this is merely another temptation. There is no connection
between your sins and your dear son who loves God with all
his heart.

Be perfectly at peace then. Live in Divine Love. Cast out
every sort of fear. This is what the Divine Master expects
of you. And the peace of God which surpasses all under-
standing will preserve your heart and your mind in our
Lord Jesus, in whose charity I am,

Your most devoted and humble servant,

Francis Libermann

P. S. Please tell me if you have finally recovered peace of
mind.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

VIII. LETTERS TO MADAME TISSERANT

Mrs. Tisserant was the mother of Eugene Tisserant who, together with Frederic Le Vavasseur, had conceived the work which led to the foundation of Father Libermann’s congregation. Ordained in 1840, he became Prefect Apostolic of Haiti in 1844. In the following year, after the failure of the Haitian mission, he was appointed Prefect Apostolic of the Two Guineas. He died December 7, 1845, in a shipwreck on his way to Africa.

Alexandre Dumas, author of The Count of Monte Cristo, who also was a Haitian, had nothing but praise for the parents of Father Tisserant. In his Journal he wrote:

Let me say a word about the “Work of the Holy Angels,” a house for poor orphans.

When you pass through St. Denis street, if you are not afraid of being crushed by vehicles or thrown off balance by passers-by, stop at no. 248. Until 1849 this building was used as a pharmacy, which was operated by an excellent man named Tisserant. Here was the start, the humble nest of the Orphanage.

One day, an old woman, holding a small girl by the hand, entered the pharmacy under the pretext of buying a drug; she paid for it and forgot (!) the child in the pharmacy. The child was two years old. Madame Tisserant, a good and holy woman with a charitable heart thought for a few days that the old woman would return to fetch the poor little child. A month passed by, but no one came. She understood then that the child had been sent her by the good Lord. She could have sent it to the asylum for foundlings but she refused to do it. However, since she had already seven of her own who had excellent appetites, she engaged the services of another lady to bring up the pretty baby who was baptized under the name of Marie-Ange. You see that the little girl thus won two beautiful names by losing her own.

The charity of the two ladies became known in that part of the city and lazy parents found it advantageous to follow the example of the old woman in depositing their...
children in that pious establishment. So one child after another found its way there and Madame Tisserant felt obliged to get other women to help her.

Today the Orphanage has ninety little girls; it is the only orphanage that does not refuse children born out of wedlock.

Mr. Tisserant died in 1849. He was a friend of Récamier [the French Minister], who admired both his heart and his science. Science might perhaps have been able to enrich Mr. Tisserant, but how can you amass wealth when you give your drugs away to the poor and try to raise the children who are forgotten in a drugstore? Tisserant thus died poor, leaving behind a work founded by him that was richer than himself.

Besides the testimony of the famous writer there is also the tribute of Father Lamoise:

I was in Paris on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1845. This was the day on which the devout mother of Father Tisserant, together with other ladies of the capital, requested a novena of perpetual prayer in honor of the Blessed Virgin in behalf of Father Tisserant and the Mission of the Two Guineas. And it was on that very day that Father Tisserant rendered his beautiful soul to God through the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

His virtuous parents were members of several charitable societies. It was a pleasure to see them disputing with one another in the house regarding what could be given out in works of charity. “She takes everything for her own,” said Mr. Tisserant, “and leaves nothing for me to wear when I have to go to meetings!”
Libermann’s grief over the death of Father Eugene Tisserant.

Letter One  La Neuville, January 1, 1846  Vol. 8, p. 3

Dear Friends:

[Our Sorrow Must be Submissive to God’s Holy Will]

I am not going to announce to you the sorrowful event that brought mourning to us all! You have certainly been informed of it and your hearts must be filled with profound grief. I would try to console you were it not that I myself am most grievously afflicted by it. I suffer from the threefold sorrow of having lost an intimate friend and zealous collaborator who was most dear to my heart, of seeing an important mission deprived of one upon whom I had built the fondest hopes, and finally of beholding a family who is more than dear to me plunged into sadness and desolation.

I feel your sorrow as keenly as my own and, at the same time, am unable to bring you consolation.

Great is our loss and it is deeply felt. But what can we say or do? God gave us that dear friend and He has taken him away. May His Holy Name be blessed! Who would dare to ask Him to justify His action? Who would dare to say, “Lord, why have you done this to us?”

All God’s designs transcend our feeble intelligence and His decrees are always most merciful. Let us prostrate ourselves in His holy presence and say to Him, “Lord, what You do is done well! What a joy it would have been for us, Lord, if we had possessed this dear child of our Blessed Mother a little longer! Who would not have desired to have the consolation of seeing him labor many long years for Your glory! But our plans are not Your plans. You are the Master; we are but
VIII. LETTERS TO MADAME TISSERANT

Your poor servants. You have willed to destroy our beautiful dreams; You have crushed our heart by sorrow. We submit to Your Adorable will and adore what we are not able to understand. We make this sacrifice for You with all our hearts.”

My dear friends: Terrible indeed is the trial which Divine Goodness has sent us. Let us be faithful! Let us strengthen our faith and quicken our love for the God of mercy. If we want succor and encouragement, let us have recourse to Mary. She will console us; She will give back courage to our fainting hearts. We know that Mary guided all the steps of that dear and faithful child of her Heart. We may be sure therefore that if she led him on that disastrous voyage, it was in order that she might more quickly open for him the door of the home of the Blessed.

[A Blessed Death]

Your son is not to be pitied! He now possesses what he so ardently longed for. He leaves us here in this world where we must still wend our way among suffering and sorrows. But let us console ourselves; our time will come also and we shall have the happiness of joining him in glory. There God will wipe away all tears from our eyes. We shall receive ample rewards. We shall receive full consolation for the sacrifice we make to the adorabe will of God.

One thing that can already help to console us is that we can firmly hope that he has already received eternal blessedness as a reward following that sad catastrophe. If he perished at sea it was solely because of the ardent zeal that had led him there. He felt unable to wait for the departure of the vessel that was scheduled to bring him to the dear souls for whose welfare he desired to sacrifice himself. So he eagerly sought passage on the Papin, a ship that would bring him a
little sooner to the land which he wanted to sanctify by his labors, although this vessel was making a detour.

Our friend did not foresee the disaster that was destined for this vessel; but He who inspired his ardent zeal, knew it well and it was not unknown to Mary. God wanted him to end his life on that ship. It was a blessing for him and it is a consolation for us that his life ended there where his ardent love for God and zeal for the salvation of souls had caused him to be. His recompense will be great indeed! May divine mercy grant us a similar death! We would then be able to present ourselves with confidence before the Sovereign Judge.

Let us pray to our Lady, asking her to pour out on us the tender affection of her Immaculate Heart with which she favored that soul that was so dear to her.

I feel perfectly confident that she will pour into your hearts the balm of consolation and will enable you to gain merit from that cruel sacrifice.

I beg you, always preserve the habit of friendship toward me which was initiated and sustained by our good Father Eugene. You may count on it that I will always remain,

Your devoted, most sincere and most affectionate friend and servant,

Francis Libermann
priest of the Holy Heart of Mary
Regarding her son's death. Requests about works of Mercy.

Letter Two  La Neuville, January 31, 1846  Vol. 8, p. 50

Dear Mrs. Tisserant:

[Your Son Died as an Apostle]

I enclose a copy of a letter sent me by Father Maynard, Prefect Apostolic of Senegal, dated January 24th. In it he gives details regarding the admirable conduct of our dear Father [Tisserant] throughout the terrible ordeal which led him to the end of his career.

This letter is very consoling. The details strengthen the idea I have had since the first arrival of news. I said to myself, perhaps my dear confrere will have to die from this, his last illness [Father Tisserant had become gravely ill after returning from Haiti in 1845]. This would have been most painful for him, for me, and for you as well—to think that he had to leave this world and that death took him while he was inactive. Our good Mother has not wished to permit such a premature and useless death. She wanted her servant to shed his mortal remains on the field of battle.

When I beheld him in his illness, it always grieved me to see him run the danger of dying while doing nothing. His ardent zeal deserved something better than that. As soon as I learned that his ship had been wrecked, I felt sure that he had shown great zeal in such a solemn moment. Knowing now that what I foresaw has been fulfilled, I can only bless God's goodness and Mary's tender love for her servant. Join me in making this sacrifice wholeheartedly; there is nothing but mercy in that sorrowful event.

I spoke to Father Schwindenhammer about the German woman whom you placed with Mrs. Beyrier. He told me
that this lady is very pious and very good, and that she does not know what evil is and is ready to take the responsibility for her. Hence there is no difficulty in placing with her the poor orphan towards whom you feel moved by compassion through the promptings of the Holy Heart of Mary.

Mother Saint-Bernard, the superior of Louvencourt has asked me to recommend another young person to you and I could not refuse to speak to you about her. You should examine in the presence of our Blessed Mother whether you should undertake anything in this regard. The poor girl in question is between seventeen and eighteen; she has a difficult character, limited intelligence, and a weak and cold piety. Good Mother Saint-Bernard does not know what to do with her; she causes her great embarrassment. Celestine Denis can give you information about this girl—her name is Catherine Delsoit. I believe she is able to work well.

If you agree, and accept that Father Thévaux write the [biographical] notice regarding our beloved [Father Eugene], I have no objections. I’ll even give details regarding the part of his life that is known to me.

I presume that my sister-in-law will soon arrive here from the United States.

I will pray to our good Mother that she may cure you of your illness.

I have the honor of being, in the charity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary,

Your most humble servant,

Francis Libermann,
priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

Please give my most sincere and friendly regards to Mr. Tisserant and to the whole family.
VIII. LETTERS TO MADAME TISSERANT

Libermann explains in a pleasing way why he cannot invite her to stay at the Seminary.

Letter Three

Vol. 9, p. 259

Notre Dame du Gard, August 27, 1847

Dear Mrs. Tisserant:

Don’t be angry with me because I have delayed so long in replying to the request which Mr. Herpin made in your name on behalf of Gratien. We had to find out first whether there would be room for him during the holidays, for our confreres are all coming to stay here. So I have waited until our two communities had come. We are now all together and I see that there will be no difficulty in finding a little space for Gratien. I shall beg his father to bring him to us and to spend a few days with us; it will be our pleasure to offer him a neat room which is reserved for distinguished friends who come to pay a visit. I feel sure that Mr. Tisserant will take advantage of this nice opportunity.

On the other hand, I don’t dare invite Madame Tisserant, for we would have to leave her below in the parlor near the courtyard, and it is evident that it would not be worthwhile coming from so great a distance to stay here near the door, although it would be on the inside! I know for certain that you entertain higher ambitions than that in regard to Heaven, that you are not content with aiming at getting a place just behind the heavenly door! You must at least get as far as the apartment of the ladies-in-waiting of the Queen of Angels!

271
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

If I found it possible to find a lodging for you, I would invite you for something which, I know, would please you, namely, the baptism of a sturdy Negro who is at present under instruction. I think that this ceremony will take place towards the end of September...

Best regards to Mr. Tisserant and the entire family.

Your most humble and devoted servant,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN,
priest of the Holy Heart of Mary
IX. LETTERS TO MME. VICTOR REMOND-DE GOY

IX. LETTERS TO MADAME VICTOR REMOND-DE GOY

Mrs. Victor Remond was the sister of Father de Goy, a great friend of Francis Libermann. She wrote as follows about him:¹

My brother spent three years at [the seminary of] Issy and had Mr. Libermann [who was then only a seminarian] as his spiritual director. During those three years, my brother told me, he never noticed the least fault in that holy young man, not even the small faults we so easily commit and for which we excuse ourselves. His charity towards everybody was always the same and it was very great. During his [epileptic] illness Mr. Libermann sometimes said to my brother: “How lucky you are! You will become a priest!” His charity and his profound faith were contagious. He was gentle and simple. . . .

I would like to tell the story of the great service which that saintly man rendered me. My brother had written to me from the Seminary: “Here we have a saint such as has not appeared for a long time and will not appear soon again.”

Some time later, my brother showed me a few letters of Mr. Libermann and told me that his spiritual direction was so joyful, so delightful that—referring to our childhood when my brother used to keep some candy for me—he said to himself, this is too good [to keep for myself], I must tell my sister. But I replied that I would not dare to write to Mr. Libermann.

When my brother had been back at the Seminary for a few months I experienced pains which I now consider to have been caused by my arden temperament and my lively desires for God. I suffered heart pangs during prayer and they made me lose my breath. It was as if an iron hand were fastened on me and I was very much afraid. I then recalled what my brother had told me about Mr. Libermann and wrote to be introduced to the latter. Mr. Libermann’s reply was: “Let the lady write to me, and if I

¹Notes et documents, vol. 1, pp. 444 f.
see that it is the spirit of the Lord who is guiding her, I will reply."
I wrote to Mr. Libermann and he answered.

Libermann requests further information about her spiritual condition before undertaking to guide her.

Letter One undated (1838 or 39) Vol. 1, p. 445

Dear Mrs. Remond:

You wish to ask my advice about the interior pains which it pleases Our Lord to give you. I shall gladly do whatever I can to be useful to you, if it pleases Our Lord to give me that grace and I should be very guilty of great ingratitude toward Divine Goodness if I refused to render you that service.

Believe me, dear Mrs. Remond, that I shall consider it a great grace the Lord grants me, if I can be of some help to you.

Reply simply to the following questions, in all peace and confidence . . . [The series of questions regarding her character and habits has not been preserved.]

Pray to the Holy Spirit to enlighten you and tell me very simply the things as you see them, and then worry no more about them and think no more of them. It is to be hoped that the Lord will make known your interior disposition to me, as he usually does when it pleases Him to give me this grace.

I assure you, dear Mrs. Remond, that I am the most humble and devoted servant of your soul, in the holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Francis Libermann
Jesus wants to live in you as He lived in Mary.

Letter Two

{Rennes (undated fragment), 1838}

[Madame:]

Preserve a sweet confidence in your soul, for you are the well-beloved daughter of the Lord. Your life should be hidden in Him, so that you may live His life. He desires to live in you as He lived in Mary. You are an empty vessel which the Lord desires to fill, and if it pleases Divine Goodness, you will later better understand the comparison.

Here is what you ought to do. Entertain and increase the desire of living for God alone. For this purpose open the eyes of your soul and realize that you possess nothing of yourself, but that all holiness and all grace reside in Jesus. Have always a quiet and peaceful recourse to His divine bounty, for you have a very real desire to live for Him alone, but your desire is not yet translated into practice.

In regard to that interior pain, I am not able to give you my opinion, since I lack the necessary information. All that I am able to say is that it seems good rather than evil. I consider it as a stepping-stone, as a means to ascend to God. Don’t worry about it. When you suffer it, abandon yourself to the Lord, your well-beloved Lord and Savior, in order that He may dispose things according to His divine good pleasure. Write to me every month or more often, if you feel the need of it, and give me an account of your inner being in all simplicity, as you have done in the past. Speak and act with a certain reserve more interior than exterior.

Tell me about your meditation; the length of time you spend in it; what its subject is, etc.
Entirely yours in the holy love of Jesus and Mary, in which I am,

Your poor servant,

Francis Libermann, acolyte

81

Devotion to God Incarnate. Do not act for Jesus but let Him act in you. About ungratefulness.

Letter Three  \{Rennes, 1838\}    Vol. 1, p. 446

Praised be Jesus and Mary!

Madame:

[Devotion to God Incarnate]

I greatly rejoice because of your devotion to the Incarnation. Make your meditation on this subject; it will be sufficient to spend one half hour in it in the morning. Begin by recollecting yourself and by placing your soul in a certain repose and peace before the Divine Majesty. Next, conceive a profound sentiment of your lowliness in God's presence, humbling yourself interiorly in the sight of your nothingness, your incapability, of all your miseries and all your sins. Then raise your soul, gently turning away your thoughts from yourself. Consider the [Divine] Word in His immensity, which fills the whole universe and all time with His greatness and His infinite perfections. See Him as it were reduced to a point, to live in Mary with a great love and an incomprehensible delight, and say to yourself that He desires to live in you with the same life of love with which He lived in Mary.
IX. LETTERS TO MME. VICTOR REMOND-DE GOY

Up to the present, you have considered yourself as acting, praying, suffering for Jesus, and desiring to live His life. Change this view, and consider Jesus acting in you with incomparable gentleness and peace, and desiring with a great love to establish His dwelling therein, as He has established it in Mary, and to make you live His own life; or rather, give yourself to Jesus in order that your view may be changed.

[Forget Yourself]

Forget yourself: why always desire to be occupied with self? The fault which you have committed deserves reproof. The next time you feel this surge of revolt, remain for a time recollected before God in all submission and quiet. Afterwards speak very little, and that with fear and with peace. Wait before acting, until that feeling [of revolt] has entirely disappeared; or if you are obliged to act, do it with great reserve. Refrain also from making any sort of inventory of your faults.

I ask you one favor, Madame. Every time my advice is contrary to that of your confessor, prefer his opinion to mine.

Regarding those qualms of conscience which he was unwilling to accept, try to confess that fault once more. If he forbids it, be content with accusing yourself to Our Lord, in the bottom of your heart and with a spirit of love.

[No One Can Be Ungrateful to You]

In regard to your saying that a certain person was ungrateful toward you, Oh! I fail to understand you! For no one can be ungrateful toward you. If this person received some benefit from you, well, she rendered you a great service and you must thank her in your own heart. I see no one ungrateful in all this, except yourself. Pray God that He may
pardon your real ingratitude, and do not imagine that anyone is capable of being ungrateful toward you. Far from holding anything against her, love her. You should wish her well and do what you can for her with all your heart, if it pleases Our Lord to grant you this further grace.

Entirely yours in the holy love of Jesus and Mary, in which I am

Your devoted servant,
FRANCIS LIBERMANN, Acolyte

82

How to prepare for Confession. Avoid impatience and pre-occupation.

Letter Four {Rennes, 1838} Vol. 1, p. 446

Praised be Jesus and Mary!

Madame:

Purify your heart; reject from your conscience everything that may displease God; or rather, give your soul to Jesus, in order that He may purify it more and more.

[How to Prepare for Confession]

When you want to go to confession, begin by recollecting yourself and adoring God, placing your soul in calm and repose before Him, somewhat as in the beginning of your meditation, without however, going so deeply into it; and then enter into a spirit of humiliation, sorrow and love, at the sight of your sins. Open your soul before your Savior, in order that He may look at your wounds and heal them.
This opening of the interior of your soul must be done with all suavity, humiliation, confusion and peace. Consider your little child when he has hurt itself; he shows you his little hand, knowing that you will apply a remedy and console him.

After this, recall peacefully the faults committed since your last confession. This examen should not be done with precipitation nor in a searching way, but with calm and with a spirit of love. It is sufficient that your mind, filled with a love for Our Lord and always in His holy presence, consider its interior, and that your memory remain in repose, in order that you may read, as in a book, the faults which you have committed. You must never be anxious to know whether you forget some of them or not. All this disquiet and this intense application estrange you from Our Lord. Do not leave Him for a moment, but act always without strain or tension. Afterwards, enter into a spirit of humiliation and of love. Make your confession calmly, without haste or excitement; do it for the love of Our Lord and animated with a profound affection for Him.

[Avoid Impatience and Pre-occupation]

I see, Madame, that you have a keenly sensitive nature, so much the better! What you need is to bear your trials according to the divine Will. It seems to me that Our Lord demands from you a habitual mildness in all your sufferings; avoid even the first movements of impatience. For this purpose keep your soul in great calmness before God; and if you have permitted these first movements of impatience, endeavor to remain in a humble repose before Him until they have vanished. Act afterwards with gentleness and a certain reserve. Do not give in to the itch for talking.

I notice also that you are a poor teacher! No doubt this defect springs from the fact that you are too preoccupied. When you desire to teach children, begin by removing any
manifestation of chagrin, preoccupation or worry. Your mind should be free as if you had nothing else to do or to think about. You must then come down to the level of the intelligence of the children, identify yourself with them, and, slowly and gently, try to infuse into their minds what you desire. This exercise is very good for you to develop the virtue of patience.

Entirely yours in the holy love of Jesus and Mary, in which I am,

Your poor servant,

Francis Libermann, acolyte

Holy Communion and how to prepare for it.

Letter Five (fragment)  {Rennes, 1838}  Vol. 1, p. 446

Praised be Jesus and Mary!

Madame:

Entertain and increase more and more in your heart the desire of living for God alone. In your meditations, follow your attraction and do not worry about the method. Be content to return to the latter when you happen to feel no particular attraction.

[Holy Communion and How to Prepare for It]

Yes, consider often the reign of Jesus in Mary, a mysterious and ineffable reign of peace, mildness and love. As regards Communion, it is generally proper for you to receive, and
you should regard as a temptation whatever tends to keep you away from it. I am not of the opinion that you should stay away from Communion because of the person you mention. Ask your confessor’s permission to receive Communion during the week, whenever you like to do so; ask him especially to be allowed to receive on feasts of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints to whom you have a particular devotion; determine such days and then make no more changes.

This is the way in which you should conduct yourself on these important occasions [of receiving Communion]. Prepare yourself for it with a great spirit of love and childlike confidence, aiming always at pacifying and calming your soul in order that the divine Savior may come and unite Himself to it in a more living and intimate manner than usual. When you have received Him do not act too much yourself, but allow Him to act in you; remain in silence before Him, allowing Him to animate and vivify you with His own life and His love, with which He comes to unite you to Himself, so that you are, as it were, lost in Him. Remain thus delivered and abandoned to your dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in order that He may dispose of you according to His divine wishes, and may fashion you according to His holy love. Toward the end of your thanksgiving, if you feel sentiments of gratitude and of love, gently yield to them, but do not act too much of yourself.

[Avoid Anxiety Over Faults of Weakness]

Our Lord bestows a great grace upon you when He reproaches you for indulging in innocent pleasures. When you happen to have committed a fault of this kind, humble yourself before God, and elicit acts of desire to belong to Him and to do nothing except in order to please Him.

It is likewise a very great grace, when the Lord chides you for entertaining useless thoughts. In general, when you
are at fault, do not become worried. Your faults are usually but the result of weakness. The divine Savior does not aban-
don His well-beloved on that account, but takes pity on her. Do not fear, do not hesitate to open your soul before Him in order that He may see your wounds and your bruises, and heal them.

Do not speak much about your interior, do not ask advice from everybody, but gradually accustom yourself to consult God in the depths of your heart. Despise the flies of self-
love which may happen to bite you. You say that your de-
fects dishonor piety. But, Madame, imprint deeply in your mind that you are and will never be worth anything either for the glory of God or for His holy love.

Regarding your present difficulty of conscience, you may explain it to me so that I may give you my opinion. Do not yield to anxiety on account of the pangs of heart; they will pass. I beg of you, Madame, do not allow anything of what I write to you, to cause you grief. Take things with sim-
licity, according to the spirit in which they are written by me.

Entirely yours in the holy love of Jesus and Mary, in which I am,

Your poor servant,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, acolyte.
IX. LETTERS TO MME. VICTOR REMOND-DE GOY

Consider Jesus living in you. Act with the freedom of God's children. Be charitable toward all.

Letter Six  Rennes, 1838  Vol. 1, p. 446

Praised be Jesus and Mary!

Madame:

I know very well that you wish to stop making considerations regarding Jesus as He lives in Mary; you would prefer to take this dear treasure in your own heart to consider and possess it in yourself. Behold Him then spreading and establishing His sweet dominion in your soul and organizing in it His reign of love, with so much gentleness and with ineffable sweetness. Do not on that account neglect or abandon His holy Mother. It is she who has led you to Jesus. Be always grateful to her for this favor.

Continue to make your meditation on the Incarnation, and during the day remain in sweet and peaceful union with your well-beloved Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Your exterior conduct should show the influence of this interior view and attitude, engendering great modesty; genuine modesty can spring from no other source. Speak and act with gentle moderation. In church, forget entirely those who surround you, consider yourself alone under the eyes of God and of the holy angels. I also wish you to avoid whatever may draw attention to yourself. However, I approve your practice of occasionally kneeling on the floor, when there are not many people present, in order to show your great respect for the most Blessed Sacrament. After all, the custom of using chairs in Church has not always existed.

In your Communions, in accordance with what you tell me, speak as long as the divine Savior places His sacred words
in your heart; toward the end of your thanksgiving remain in silence before Him, and do not act too much yourself. I approve greatly that you hide yourself in the virtues and the merits of Mary. Continue to act in this way, for this is excellent and will render you pleasing to God. Hide also in Jesus, offering His infinite merits to the Most Blessed Trinity, to make up for your wretchedness.

[Be Free as a Child of God and Gentle Toward All Others]

When I learned about "the terrible infidelity that oppressed your conscience," I was unable to refrain from laughing heartily about that "crime." The next time act more sensibly and with more childlike freedom!

Try, Madame, to be mild and charitable in all your judgments. I know that men are wicked, that they are all nothing but sin and corruption as you are yourself! But, if you desire to reach a solid and genuine piety, you must accustom yourself to preserve great mildness toward everybody, both in your external relations and in your judgments.

In regard to those uncalled-for praises which you receive, place yourself in all truthfulness before God, and then answer that it is not nice to make compliments like that. In proportion as the reign of God is established in you, you will grow in the discernment of your faults, your shortcomings, your failings and miseries. But you will see them in a different light, and will bear them with more gentleness.

It would have been a pleasure for me to see you and to speak to you about your mental prayer; and I hope, yes,
IX. LETTERS TO MME. VICTOR REMOND-DE GOY

Mrs. Remond, it is truly my hope that even in this world God will give me this grace and I thank Him for it.¹

Entirely yours in the love of Jesus and Mary, in which I am,

Your poor servant,

Francis Libermann, acolyte.

¹During his first journey to Rome, Francis Libermann visited Mrs. Remond, but she failed to recognize him, and the humble seminarian did not reveal his identity.
This letter was addressed to two new converts from Judaism.

From now all you must love the life of Jesus. Empty yourself of self-love, to be filled with the holy love of Jesus.

Rennes, October 10, 1893

Vol. 1, p. 473

Praised be Jesus and Mary!

Dear Friends and Brothers in Our Lord:

[From Now on, Live the Life of Jesus]

I address this letter to both of you because you are equally dear to my heart in the charity of the new Master, or rather of the New Father who has recently adopted you. Your souls should from now on live only with the divine life of Jesus—the life He has recently communicated to you. You are no longer earthly men, but angels of God, in whom Jesus accomplishes the wonders of His divine love. That is why I don’t fear to call you my brothers and my very dear brothers, not according to the flesh and blood in Abraham, but according to the Spirit of God and in Jesus, our Sovereign Lord, who henceforth must be our only love. Let us rejoice, my most beloved brothers! We are great in God’s sight and in the sight of the angels.

We have become princes of the royal blood of our sweet, and beloved Jesus, the Sovereign Lord of Heaven and earth and of all creatures. He has begotten us on the Cross amid
LETTER TO MESSRS. DANIEL

sorrows and affliction, and has effected this holy generation on the day of our Baptism.

Now that you have been favored with the supreme blessing of receiving in your souls the holy and divine life of Jesus, you must manifest it also in all your conduct. It must be the subject of all your thoughts and the object of all your desires. You need two things: first, to preserve in your soul the life of Our Lord by the purity of your desires and affections. Be on your guard against letting yourself be moved by any earthly desire. Never attach yourselves to any created object, but only to Jesus, who must henceforth be all things to you. Above all, be on your guard against self-love, for from now on, the affection of your heart must no longer be directed to your own self, but to Jesus, our only Sovereign and our All.

[Empty of Self-Love, You Can Be Filled with the Love of Jesus]

Yes, my dear brothers, Jesus must be the Beloved; He must be all things to our souls. Let us therefore empty our souls of all selfish love and all improper love for creatures, so that the life of our Sovereign All may be the one and only life of our souls. If the Master wants you to love any earthly being: your friends, your children, your wives, love them as His creatures, as belonging to Him, as being exceedingly dear to Him, as objects of His affection, of His love and [as animated by] His divine life.

May your souls then expand in the delight, the peace, the joy and the holiness of the holy love of Jesus. May Jesus transform your every sentiment into the pure, chaste, and holy love which fills His own soul or rather, may He Himself be your love, your only love! Open your souls, expand them, make them as vast as the ocean, before our most sweet Jesus, in order that He may fill them to overflowing with His most holy Love.
I don't know if you fully comprehend the thoughts I want to convey to you, for, when one speaks of the love of Jesus in souls, one can never fully explain one's mind nor be perfectly understood. We see more than we are able to understand for who has ever been able to comprehend the length, the breadth, the height, the depths of the knowledge, and the immensity of the love of Jesus? But at least, give yourselves entirely to this great and incomprehensible love of Jesus. In this is contained all that is necessary to satisfy and satiate you, to make you superabound [with happiness], whatever might be the conditions or the circumstances of your lives. Jesus and His sacred Love are enough for us. Let us therefore see and love all things in Jesus and in His most holy love!

I wanted to speak to you of the way to acquire the knowledge of the life of Jesus in Himself and in souls. But I will tell you on another occasion, for this is the most powerful means of preserving and increasing this life in you.

The second thing which I wanted to explain is how to put this life into practice and how to produce and express it outwardly, not by doing extraordinary things, which we must carefully avoid, but by practicing perfect mildness, perfect humility, and other virtues, of which I shall speak another time.

I beg your pardon for my barbarous style! What can I do, who knows nothing nor desires to know anything on this earth except Jesus and His Divine Love? May He live in and reign over all creatures, as He has done in Mary, in His holy love, in which I am,

Your most poor brother and servant,

Francis Libermann, acolyte
XI. LETTERS TO DR. PAUL DRACH

Dr. Paul Drach, famous convert Jew, a great scholar and writer who eventually became librarian of the Propaganda in Rome, was one of God’s special instruments in bringing Francis Libermann into the Church.

At a later time Dr. Drach introduced Father Libermann to Pope Gregory XVI, who put his hand upon Libermann’s head in blessing; after which the saintly Pontiff was heard to say: “He will be a saint.”

86

Thoughts on the Diaconate. News about his work and family.

Letter One August 11, 1841 Vol. 2, p. 494

J. M. J.

Dear Sir and Friend:

I am glad that I can send you this letter through the good offices of Father Dietrich, professor at the Seminary of Strasbourg, for I think that it will give you great satisfaction. This priest is very talented and he wants to get acquainted with you, for he has often heard others speak about you. He has treated me with much kindness.

[Thoughts About the Diaconate]

I have nothing but good news to tell you for the present. The good Lord has overwhelmed me with graces and favors beyond—the infinitely beyond—what I deserve. I received the diaconate yesterday, on the Feast of Saint Lawrence. “What shall I render the Lord for all that He has rendered to me?” How poor, feeble, and wretched I was when I left Rome
and crossed the sea to come here! And now Our Lord has enriched me with His gifts and graces.

"I am unworthy of all the favors and all the goodness you have had for your servant" [Gen. 32,11]. I could never have believed that such things would come about. I assure you that it was difficult for me to believe them even on the eve of my ordination. But now I do believe, for I am most vividly conscious of the grace that was bestowed on me. I never understood what the diaconate was. It is necessary to receive this sacred character in order to understand it a little.

It is not enough, however, to have received that order to possess its rich treasure. I must make it bear fruit; I must not go and bury it as was done by the wicked servant. You know better than anybody else how little I am able to do for God's glory. Please pray Our Lord to finish what He has so wonderfully begun and to make that which He has sowed bear fruit.

I assure you that I am ready to do everything, to sacrifice all things for the love of our adorable Master. I know that I must no longer rest nor withdraw, but that I must labor for the salvation of souls and glorify Jesus Christ as much as is in me to do. I fear that, in spite of so many favors, I may remain a useless vessel in God's Church—a vessel adorned with pearls and precious stones, but which will be broken in the end and cast on the dunghill, after it has been shorn of all its precious adornments; for nothing that is useless should be kept in the House of our great King!

I hope, nevertheless, in the mercy of Our Lord, and put the greatest confidence in the most Blessed Virgin who will sustain and strengthen me and obtain for me the grace to bear fruit for the glory of her Son.
XI. LETTERS TO DR. PAUL DRACH

[News About His Work and Family]

The affairs of the missions are proceeding well, as I explained in my letter to His Eminence [Cardinal Fransoni] which, no doubt, you have had the kindness to deliver to him.

In a few weeks, four young priests will join me to spend this year in our novitiate; another is already in his mission.

Please extend my respectful homage to His Eminence, and to His Excellency Bishop Cadolini, and tell them that I am firmly resolved to labor from now on with all my power. I also beg them most humbly to continue to favor us with their kindness and to assist our poor little society which wants to devote itself to the glory of God in the missions. Everything seems tranquil and favorably disposed at present, but this will surely not continue and we can expect small crosses very soon.

My brother [Dr. Samson] and all his family are well; he sends you his greetings. Nathanael, [i.e. Samuel, one of Libermann’s brothers, later baptized in Paris and who went to the U. S. A.] married in America. He married a French woman who was born at La Ferte; I am afraid that she might be an adventuress. He told me nothing about the marriage and has not written to me since. I don’t know what to make of it.

This should suffice for the present. I am afraid I have bored you by this letter written so badly both from the moral and material standpoint. I think, however, that you will not be offended but will rather imitate the example of God himself “who looks at the heart.”

I am certain that you believe and will continue to believe that I am most respectfully and sincerely attached to you, and remain,

Your most humble, affectionate and obedient servant,

Francis Libermann, deacon

291
Libermann expresses his disappointment about the transfer of his work from Alsace to “the interior of France.” First beginnings of his congregation.

Letter Two    La Neuville, December 10, 1841    Vol. 3, p. 64

J. M. J.

Dear and Honorable Friend:

I have wanted for a long time to write you and send news that, I believe, will give you much pleasure. . . .

You learned from my last letter that I was ordained a deacon in Strasbourg. I thought at that time that I would remain there and would be ordained to the priesthood at Christmas. I had even begun to take steps to get in touch with a priest of Germany. But the good Lord decided otherwise. Several Fathers who are interested in our poor project in behalf of the Negroes, did their best, without my knowledge, to have us establish ourselves in the interior of France, not far from Paris. They spoke about me to the bishop of Amiens, who was very favorably disposed to their requests. He said that he would gladly see the foundation of such a work in his diocese and would be very happy to see subjects enter this new congregation. He offered to ordain me a priest during the Ember Days around the Feast of Saint Matthew. It was with great sorrow that I resolved to leave Strasbourg, for I was hoping to be of some use to the clergy of Germany, which has a bad reputation, and I also thought that I would get some vocations from that country.

On the other hand it seemed quite clear that our stay in the interior of France would be better for us. I therefore consented, although it was hard for me, for I believed that God
had manifested His will. I therefore came to Amiens and was ordained on the eighteenth of September.

I had the happiness of saying my First Mass on the Feast of Saint Matthew. From then on I have gone daily to prostrate myself before the throne of the Most Holy Trinity to offer the homage of the whole Church, to offer the Most Holy Sacrifice for her and ask for the graces and help which she needs. What an intercessor! But I have the Sacred Victim with me and, with Him, one is always heard.

I have been in Amiens since September 18. We are four in all. Four more priests were expected to join us but one became discouraged at the instigation of an ill-intentioned person who made him dislike us; the three others were refused permission to join our society by their bishops. This is our greatest difficulty at the moment. . . . I feel almost sure, nevertheless, that two of those three who were refused their exeat [permission] will come a little later on. They are solid men whose vocation seems quite certain and their bishops have merely postponed their permission in order to test them. . . . Several others have asked to enter. . . . You see that we are proceeding slowly but we are not without hope! I have great confidence in the most Blessed Virgin who has already done much for us. Moreover, prayers have been said for us for a long time by the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Victories.

We have rented a country house that belongs to the diocese and live like hermits. We have a nice garden and plenty of room for walks and recreation. . . .

The bishop has granted us permission to have a chapel and we even have the happiness of having the Blessed Sacrament. This is a great consolation for us. The good Lord has seen to it that we got all that was necessary to furnish our house. . . . What a joy to think that the Lord is in our midst! There is nothing luxurious in the poor little palace He has deigned
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANNTo accept but at least everything is kept very clean. If it pleases Him to accept our desires for the salvation of the poor souls who are lost in such great numbers and who cost Him so dearly, we shall, I hope, try to serve Him most faithfully, if He deigns to grant us that grace.

But I am longwinded! I am afraid of boring you and stealing time from your important occupations.

Please assure His Eminence, Cardinal Fransoni and Bishop Cadolini that we will always be docile children, ready to obey their least wishes, and that we will always be ready to defend the interests and honor of the Holy See, if God judges us worthy. Tell them also how things are going with us.

We are still very weak, but I hope that when we are a little better known we shall get vocations. People always distrust what is just beginning and what has not yet given proof of viability. . . .

With fond regards, dear and honorable friend, and in the love of the Heart of Mary, I remain,

Your servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANNT
XII. LETTER TO MR. LEVAVASSEUR

Mr. Levavasseur of Argentan, in the diocese of Séez, was the father of Léon Levavasseur, a seminarian, already ordained a deacon, who wanted to join Libermann’s Congregation.

He pleads with the parents of Léon not to oppose the vocation of their son.

La Neuville, September 15, 1845

Dear Sir:

I was deeply touched by your letter of the first of this month which you so kindly addressed to me. I understand perfectly well what is felt by the hearts of a father and a mother when they contemplate the imminent dangers in which their child is placed. I hasten to reassure you and quiet your apprehensions. Let me tell you in a few words what has taken place.

It is true that your son has requested admission to our house and that I have granted him this request with great satisfaction. Your son did not tell me all that you so kindly reveal about his state of health. He merely mentioned the trouble with his knee and I did not attach much importance to that, for I thought that he would get rid of that trouble by means of a little exercise and suitable remedies. One of our young men was in an almost identical condition and he has been completely cured.

Hence I did not hesitate to accept your young deacon. However, I formally declared to him that I accept him, not in order to send him to the mission, but to keep him in Europe. We are on the point of establishing a house in Rome or in the south of France. It will receive young Africans who will later return to their native country to bring and spread the faith and civilization there.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Your son pleaded with me to accept him, for he desired to go to the missions like our other confreres. I told him that his parents would find it hard to consent to it and that he ought to abandon himself to the guidance of the superiors of the house in which he wishes to enter. He agreed and seemed satisfied.

I would be glad, dear Sir, if you did not oppose his entrance with us, for I am convinced that I shall not find any one who is more capable than your son to do good in the establishment we have planned and that he would not do equally well in the work of the ministry. I intend to keep him with me a year to give him the proper training. However, if you are absolutely opposed to his entrance into our society, I am firmly resolved not to accept him, regardless of the great satisfaction his entrance would give me. This principle of never doing violence to things, is one want to follow. It is true that the Spirit of God acts strongly, but He always disposes things gently.

Since I have the pleasure of writing to a true Christian, I dare to ask you to examine this whole question in God's presence and after that follow your conscience. It is my hope, dear Sir, that you will always find in me, in such circumstances, the moderation which ought to animate the servants of God, in things that concern the service of their gentle Master.

Your most humble and obedient servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN,
Superior of the Missionaries
of the Holy Heart of Mary

Please give my sincere greeting to your son, who will always be dear to me whatever his choice may be.
XIII. LETTER TO MADAME DELAPLACE

Mrs. Delaplace was the mother of Father François Delaplace who entered the Novitiate of Notre-Dame-du-Gard in 1848, and joined Libermann's Congregation. He was Director of the Colonial Seminary in Paris in 1852, the year of Libermann's death. In 1860 he founded the Orphanage of the Holy Family and the Congregation of the Sisters Servants of the Holy Heart of Mary. He died in Paris in 1911.

89

Libermann expresses his sympathy with her sorrows and exhorts her to suffer with Jesus.

Paris, November 8, 1851

Vol. 13, p. 349

J. M. J.

Madame:

Your son asked me whether the permission I had given him to stay with his mother for a couple of weeks extended to the Sunday that comes at their end. I thought that you had already received an answer about that so I did not hurry to write to you personally, the more so because I have had a very busy week. But I have now discovered that your son's letter remained unanswered! So I hasten, belatedly, to reply directly to you. I hope that your son will have interpreted his permission in a favorable way, extending his vacation to Monday. He knows very well how eager I am to give you all possible consolation, so he could not have believed that I wanted him to interpret the permission in a narrow sense.

I am glad to have this opportunity of telling you how greatly I desire to comfort and encourage you, to the full extent of my ability, in the midst of your afflictions. Dear
Madame, you have a twofold title to our special interest in your well-being. First of all, your heart is constantly weighed down by suffering. It always resembles the Heart of Mary and is in union with Mary at the foot of the Cross. Secondly, you have given your beloved son to [the Congregation of] the most Holy Heart of Mary. He has become one of us and is as dear to us as he is to your own heart.

You may be certain, dear Madame, that God's goodness accepts your sacrifices and sorrows and that He looks upon you with love and mercy. A sacrifice made to Jesus never remains without its reward of supernatural graces and sanctification, and what please Him most are the sacrifices of the heart.

Our Lord never abandons a crucified soul, a soul that remains humbly submissive to Him. It is in such souls that He puts His delight and He reserves for them treasures of consolation and glory in heaven.

Jesus wants you to live His life in this world in order that you may also live His life in glory. His life “in Mary” [cf. O Jesus, living in Mary] was one of sorrow and privation. He deals with you as He did with His holy Mother. You ought then to unite your heart to the Heart of Mary. Be full of love and gratitude towards Jesus because of His predilection for you, which He shows by giving you so large a share in the holy life He led on earth.

Be humble, generous, calm and peaceful. You belong to Jesus. Live with Jesus and let Jesus live with you. In this you will find your consolation, your support, and the strength your soul needs.
XIII. LETTER TO MADAME DELAPLACE

I will continue to pray for you as in the past, and I beg you to give us a small share in your devotions and good works which make you so pleasing to God.

I remain, dear Madame,

Your humble and devoted servant in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, Superior
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

XIV. LETTERS TO MISS BARBIER

Miss Barbier felt a strong inclination for the religious life but there were great obstacles in the way. Her parents and more specially one of her brothers were opposed to her entrance into a religious congregation and, besides, she was afflicted by serious illness and nervous troubles.

Father Libermann knew both kinds of trials from personal experience and his letters to Miss Barbier show how he was able to use her difficulties as an occasion for progress in perfection. Her trials and crosses led her to a more intimate union with the Crucified.

90

Your brother's opposition is a cross Jesus wants you to bear. Let God be your consolation and your only love.

Letter One Amiens, June 5, 1845 Vol. 7, p. 189

J. M. J.

Dear Miss Barbier:

[Bear Man's Opposition as a Cross Sent by God]

Your letter consoled and grieved me at the same time. I felt grief because I should have liked to give you the comfort and encouragement which you need in your present painful situation. A visit from me or a short note would have helped you a hundred times more than the remedies that have been given you. But what can we do? Your good parents do not properly understand. They imagine things that are nonexistent, and in spite of all their affection for you they cause you suffering. Do not bear any ill-will towards them on that account. It is God who wants you to be on a cross—remain in peace. If it is possible for you to receive a letter from me
from time to time without the knowledge of your parents, ask, and I shall gladly comply with your wishes.

In your present condition you are in need of counsel. Send me your letters then through the intermediary of a person whom you can trust, and I will reply to you, for I greatly desire to help you. If you received my letters openly, this would irritate your poor brother who, by the way, is much more to be pitied than yourself. It is now three or four months that he has had that fever of exasperation which is so violent that it could lead him to the greatest excesses.

This then is what grieves me: I should like to give you all the comfort and encouragement which your condition demands, but I am unable to do so as fully as I would like.

On the other hand I am consoled because I see that the Divine Savior is wonderfully replacing me in your behalf. He does directly what He could have desired to do through this poor and miserable servant, so you are that much more fortunate. Fear nothing, He will not abandon you.

[Let God Be Your Consolation and Your Love]

Your letter shows very clearly that God consoles and sustains you; this gives me great pleasure. He deigns to nail you to the cross and this, for a true Christian, means happiness. In it you will find the means for your spiritual advancement. One day spent amid pains that are borne with resignation gives more strength and is more beneficial to our souls than all interior consolations. Be, then, always strong in the faith and have confidence in Jesus and Mary. Be strong in your love for God, strong in the spirit of sacrifice, and be happy because you are able to suffer something for the love of the Divine Master and to unite your sufferings with His.

You ought to be full of gratitude and full of love for God. He shows His love for you by the very pains He permits you
to bear. Men, by their wickedness or good will toward you, are the instruments of the mercy of the Divine Master toward you. Bless God’s goodness at all times and love tenderly the instruments He uses; be mild and kind towards them; pardon them, for they are doing incalculable good to you.

Always maintain peacefulness of soul; be gentle, preserve sweet and modest gaiety that belongs to a beloved child of God. Accustom yourself little by little to remain undisturbed by oppression and injustice. In this you must imitate your Beloved, who bore, with divine calm, the most unjust and atrocious oppression and persecution. Be like Him whom you have chosen with the intention of belonging entirely to Him. Excitement is very harmful to both your body and your soul; therefore, be firm toward yourself and firm also in your love of God.

What does it matter that men do good or evil to you, that they flatter or crush you? God is with you! Does it matter that you are able to follow your own tastes or that they are contradicted?

One thing suffices for you: “your Beloved is to you and you are to Him.” No man can take that happiness from you. On the contrary, the more you have to suffer, the greater your happiness will be. Therefore, strive always to suffer in peace, with humility, love, and perfect submission to the will of God who desires to keep you on the cross.

Once more I advise you not to occupy yourself with the question of your vocation. All you have to do for the present is to try to recover your health, if this be in accordance with God’s Holy Will. May the peace of Jesus be with you!

Your most humble servant,

Father Francis Libermann

302
Christ's Cross is good for your soul. Jesus is your Spouse.

The fruits of the Cross. How to deal with nervous afflictions.

Letter Two

Vol. 7, p. 235

July 2, Feast of the Visitation, 1845

Praised be Jesus and Mary!

Dear Miss Barbier:

[Christ's Cross is Good for Your Soul]

I have received your letter of June 25th. The good Master is fulfilling and will always fulfill His divine words: “Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.”

I greatly rejoiced at the sight of all the good He is doing to your soul through the instrumentality of His Cross. He has planted it solemnly—deeply—in the depths of your heart. It would seem that it has taken root there. Yes, it has taken root, and when your beloved parents no longer afflict you, the Cross will continue to be your lot. It will always remain your inheritance, or at least for a very long time, for it has taken root in you. The Cross is a beautiful tree, a good tree planted in your soul and it is now producing beautiful flowers; at a later date it will yield beautiful fruit. “A good tree”, says the Savior, “can only produce good fruit.” What kind of fruit? Those which He bore on Calvary. Jesus Himself will be formed in your soul by means of the Cross.

[Jesus, the Spouse of Your Soul]

This is how it comes about:

Jesus, has for a long time, desired to live in your soul through “the sanctity of His ways and the truth of His
virtues." He has sought constantly to draw you by the
sweetness of His grace, by the beauty of His light, by the
balm of His peace. You have followed Him as a sheep
follows its shepherd, and He feeds you with milk and honey.
You have seen Him, known Him, and followed Him. He
has delighted your heart and all else in you. Whatever
is not Jesus, has become insipid to you. You have desired
to follow Him forever, to withdraw into solitude with Him,
to choose Him for your Spouse, in order that you might
rest always on His Heart, live in His heavenly intimacy,
and feed on His divine and delicious love.

You wanted to be the spouse of Jesus, but this is not
accomplished so quickly. It is a great King whom you
desire to espouse. He chose you and attracted you to
Himself. He instilled His Divine Love in your soul; it
was He who made the approaches. The divine nuptials,
it seemed, would take place without trouble—but lo and
behold! Jesus asks a dowry—not one of gold or silver, how-
ever, as worldly souls might imagine for they do not know
how delicate and pure are the sentiments inspired by the
Spirit of God. The gift which Jesus demands from you is
the complete sacrifice of yourself. He bears the cost, He
takes charge of executing His designs; He plants His Cross
in your soul and immolates you to His divine love. Abandon
your self into His hands.

You desired to belong to Jesus, to be His spouse and be
intimately united with Him, but your soul had still many
imperfections, attachments, lowly desires. To belong to Jesus
it is necessary to be worthy of Him. And how can you make
yourself worthy? Only by those sufferings in which your
soul has to conquer itself constantly, to renounce and humble
itself, to submit and immolate itself with generosity, while
the grace and the divine love of Jesus, which are in the depths
of your heart, make you constant and faithful in the fulfil-
ment of all those things and prompt you to do them ever better. The greater your pains, the more deeply your cross is planted in you, the more also will grace and love increase and, as a consequence, your soul will progress proportionately in true holiness. Do you understand now how the Cross produces those delightful fruits in you?

[The Fruits of the Cross]

These fruits are the virtues of Jesus, the holiness of Jesus, union with Jesus. Do you know the nuptial hall in which Jesus unites Himself with the Church? It is Calvary. It was there that He sacrificed Himself for the Church to make her worthy of being His spouse. Since then, every soul that desires to be perfectly united with Jesus, must expect that union to be accomplished in immolation. Rejoice therefore, in the midst of tribulations, be strong, be worthy of the crucified Jesus.

Don't be angry with those who are the cause of your troubles. If God has desired to choose as torturers persons who are dear to you, you must nonetheless continue to love them tenderly. Don't grieve, at least don't grieve at the sight of their fault. Be submissive to God in this, as in everything else. Pray to obtain mercy for them. Your affliction should draw down upon them as many graces as are given to you, if this were possible. Although they cause you suffering, do not accuse them, but rather plead and intercede for them. You must do this especially in regard to your poor brother. Do not be his accuser, but his advocate with God, with Mary. Ask this good Mother to come to his defense. If he is guilty, he is more wretched than criminal. Consider only his misfortune and not his fault. See only the pains and anguish he experiences, and not the sentiments that animate him and have made him act that way toward you. Love him more than ever and call down graces upon him. He
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

will shake off his exasperation, but only later, perhaps too late for you, but that doesn’t matter—provided he returns to his God, what more can you desire?

[How to Deal With Nervous Troubles]

The pastor wants you to continue to go to Mass. He may be right in this. I don’t know your illness well enough to give you positive advice on that subject. I shall say only, that, in general, it is necessary to forget nervous troubles, to neglect and despise them. I was subject to that kind of trouble in my youth in a manner that was quite violent. The thing that caused me most harm was the fear, the anxiety, the precautions.

Try to shake off those movements and agitations of your soul. Distract yourself in such moments. Don’t allow yourself to be dominated by that nervous anxiety of the heart but act energetically against those emotions. Put yourself in a state of great indifference in God’s presence in respect to either feeling or not feeling those pains. When you have succeeded in becoming so disposed, you must then act as if you had never experienced anything.

I am telling you how I have acted as soon as I began to give myself to the good Lord. This method I have followed in a spirit of faith, with the desire of pleasing God, without thinking of recovering my health by that means, for I had no doubt that this way of acting would be most useful. In fact it has had much to do with procuring my recovery.

If you go to church, you will have the happiness of receiving communion frequently. You could pay a poor woman to help you walk—a poor woman is glad to receive ten or twenty pennies a week for one or two hours of service like that—and, as for yourself, the good you will obtain from it is worth the price.
Since your conversations with your cousin, Miss Lambre, do you so much good, I don't know why you shouldn't try to see her. If you have a poor woman to take you to church, you will find it easy to visit your cousin also. You could even visit her occasionally instead of going to church, telling her beforehand that you are coming. It might be well perhaps to go by coach to Amiens; distractions, changes are beneficial to nervous troubles. It is important for you to make good use of the summer time. In the fall, it will be more difficult for you to go out. This is the advice generally given to persons who suffer from nervous disorders. I don't know your type of illness well enough to give you my opinion about it.

I don't see any point in your speaking again to your parents about your attraction for the religious life. It can serve no good purpose, for you will merely give them useless grief and expose yourself to new and stronger opposition.

You need rest and consolation; the contradictions and the painful behavior of those with whom you live are harming you. Once again, distract yourself as much as possible and don't remain shut up so much. Go by carriage if you cannot go by donkey; go and visit your friends who live in the neighborhood; see Sister Vasseur, for example, or some other person you know.

Since you so greatly desire to write to me, all right, but do it by mail; and I'll reply by mail. Don't write too often to avoid frightening your parents.

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you and with your pious family.

Your most humble servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Superior of the Missionaries of the Holy Heart of Mary
INDEX OF SUBJECT MATTER

Abandonment to God, 29, 82, 200, 262, 266, 284, 301.
Anxiety, 29, 95, 260, 262, 281.
Bitterness, 197.
Blessed Virgin, 32, 59, 70, 74, 98, 133, 181, 194, 235, 244, 247, 252, 275.
Care of the sick, 21.
Charity, 73, 184, 186, 249, 271, 284.
Child of God, 16, 214, 284.
Child of Mary, 194.
Choice of friends, 182.
Cholera, 20.
Communion, 48, 127, 190, 193, 204, 280.
Confession, 48, 191, 195, 205, 222, 260, 278.
Confidence in God, 123, 154, 230.
Conscience of children, 96.
Consolations, 191, 301.
Conversions, 15, 20, 63, 105, 307.
Crosses, 79, 111, 125, 143, 152, 185, 186, 191, 196, 208, 226, 300.
Deafness, 249.
Death, 267, 269.
Detachment, 14, 68.
Devotions, 23, 276.
Diaconate, 289.
Disagreements, family, 17, 236.
Dispositions of the heart, 150.
Docility, 232.
Earthly goods, 94, 102, 188.
Education, 7, 30, 61, 69.
Faith, 66, 143.
Family news, 24, 37, 42, 45, 177, 291, 292.
Fear, 262.
Fervor, 66.
Fidelity to grace, 34, 47, 156.
Fraternal correction, 109, 242.
Friends, choice of, 182.
Gratitude, 34, 277.
Happiness, in God alone, 60, 82, 101, 146, 166, 199, 209; in illness, 8, 12; about sacrifice, 78, 160.
Homesickness, 202, 206.
Illness, happiness, 8; blessing of, 12.
Impatience, 279.
Joys, 78, 190, 207, 210, 214, 240, 244; earthly, 198, 210.
Kindness, 73.
Living for God, 84, 211, 262.
Love for God, 35, 185, 199, 210, 216, 287, 301.
Marriage, 9.
Meditation, 19, 50.
Miracles, 133, 143.
Nervous troubles, 306.
Novitiate, 92.
Obedience, 186.
Our Lady of Victories, 97, 133.
Patience, 26, 28, 185, 219, 232.
Peace in family, 17, 236; of mind, 208, 214.
Piety, 72.
Poverty, spirit of, 59, 102.
Priesthood, 87, 91.
Providence, 18, 115, 123, 154.
Prudence, 141.
Purity, 228.
INDEX OF SUBJECT MATTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Page(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relatives of priest</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolutions</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule for a young student</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>78, 85, 247, 252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>196, 226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scruples</td>
<td>260, 281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-denial</td>
<td>26, 287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-forgetfulness</td>
<td>277, 286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-pity</td>
<td>187, 226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shyness</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorrow</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech</td>
<td>73, 184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual directions</td>
<td>273, 274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse of the soul</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temptations</td>
<td>202, 207, 213, 228, 230, 231, 237, 245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust in God</td>
<td>15, 26, 122, 123, 240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ungratefulness</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union with Christ</td>
<td>79, 206, 250, 275, 276, 283, 286, 297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unworldliness</td>
<td>39, 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vainglory</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocation to religious life</td>
<td>112, 121, 128, 130, 142, 147, 155, 162, 166, 167, 170, 238, 295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World, spirit of the</td>
<td>40, 156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>living in the</td>
<td>211, 213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worries</td>
<td>29, 111, 143, 242</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 5282 00616 1668