

Blessed EUGENE de MAZENOD

SPIRITUAL WRITINGS

1794 - 1811



**Blessed Eugene de Mazenod
(1782-1861)**

Collection: *Oblate Writings XIV*

**SPIRITUAL WRITINGS
(1794-1811)**

Translated by
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Introduction

The thirteen volumes of Eugene de Mazenod's letters to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, already published, do not account for a quarter of his writings. These writings comprise in addition to his official correspondence as Bishop of Marseilles, his personal journal, his spiritual writings, a quantity of notes on what he read, study notes, etc.

Content of the Volumes of the Spiritual Writings of Blessed Eugene

The two volumes that follow publish only a part of Eugene's spiritual writings, those in which he speaks of himself and the workings of grace in his life.

The rest, which contain his doctrine or teaching, are more numerous¹ and their publication is not foreseen in the immediate future², for several reasons. First, the doctrine in question is one that is in many respects dated and often presented in a style that would be unacceptable today. Again, the sources of his teaching in each catechism class or instruction would have to be studied to see if he had made extensive use of various works or if he had taken them simply as a starting-point, etc. A long and difficult task, hitherto not attempted. The pastoral letters pose a special problem: who wrote them? It can be shown that Eugene wrote some of his uncle's pastoral letters, from 1823 to 1836, but it is also established that Bishop Jeancard was the author of some of his most important letters and no doubt of several of the pastoral letters as well.

¹ Notes of spiritual reading and seminary courses, catechetical classes given at Saint Sulpice in 1809 and 1811, topics proposed for the meditation of the seminarians in 1812, instructions given in Provençal in the church of the Magdalene at Aix in 1813, various writings for the Youth Congregation and the Oblate congregation, pastoral letters published between 1823 and 1861 (we have 62 of these) and numerous occasional discourses (we have found the text of 31 discourses). All these writings are kept in the archives of the Postulation, under the title DM.

² We have selected some of these documents for publication to serve as examples or because Eugene speaks in them about himself, e.g.: a catechism class (doc. 87), spiritual talks and meditation topics proposed to the seminarians (docs. 48, 65, 77, 94, 102), instructions in Aix (114, 115), writings for the Youth Congregation (117, 124, 135, 147), writings touching the Oblates (149, 150, 158, 159), discourses (192), reading notes, prayers and varia (doc. 1, 2, 7, 8, 15, 16, 19, 24, 25, 30, 38, 39, 112, 131).

The 192 documents published here, in which Eugene speaks of himself, are quite varied. They comprise especially the notes of sixteen retreats made from 1808 to 1837, spiritual conferences given while he was at the seminary, rules of life resolutions, notes of his reading and finally letters to his family or various friends.

Eugene also speaks of his spiritual life in the letters to the Oblates and especially in his Journal which will appear separately. The purpose of the collection "Oblate Writings" is, in fact, to place at the disposition of the Congregation's members the principal materials in the archives of the Founder and not the illustration of select themes³.

The retreat notes make up the lion's share of the two volumes that follow, but they may need to be interpreted. Several passages in them in fact seemed so strong to Bishop de Mazenod's first biographers that they passed over them in silence. However, writes Canon Leflon, "although one has no right to set them aside, one does have a duty to study them closely, before taking them in their strict literal meaning. First of all, these meditations do not have the precision of an examination of conscience, such as one makes for confession. Here, Eugene is not using the language of moral theology. To interpret his expression according to the strict terminology of theological principles would add to and go beyond their meaning. Rather is he speaking the traditional seminarians' language of spirituality, particularly that of the French school, which, through its reaction to the naturalism and optimism of the Renaissance, stresses the misery of man without God, in order better to exalt the grandeur of man with God. Impressed by its vocabulary, which was quite new to him, the young pupil of Saint-Sulpice seminary uses and misuses it with the untrained mind of a novice who carefully recites a well-learned lesson without delving too deeply into the meaning of the words. Eugene's absolute temperament, his love for trenchant assertions, and his youthful zeal, made his words even more exaggerated. And why should not allowances be made for the lively impression he experienced?"⁴

These retreat notes then have their limitations. They show us a

³ Several selections of texts of the Founder have been published, in particular: *Mystere pascal, Fils de l'Eglise and Pensees sur l'Eglise*, Archives Deschatelets, 1962-1963; *Selected Texts Related to the OMI Constitutions and Rules*, Rome, 1984, translated into various languages; *Eug. de Mazenod missionnaire*, by M. Courvoisier in 1975 and *My Name is Eugene de Mazenod*, by H. Charbonneau, Montreal, 1976.

⁴ J. Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, Tr. Francis D. Flanagan, O.M.I., New York, 1961, vol. I, p. 275-6.

Eugene exaggerating the faults of his past life, idealizing his plans for the future and speaking of the present moment at times of fervour, while he is at white heat and moving on a lofty plane at one remove from the realities of life. To cite but one example, we take the text of his rule of life, composed at Aix in December 1812 (doc. 109). Eugene says that the principal occupation of his life will be to love God and his chief concern will be to make him loved. However, one has the impression that one is reading the rule of a contemplative monk and not of someone who has become a priest to save souls in an active ministry. There is not a single word on ministry and thirty pages on his duties to God and the means for staying in union with Him by pious exercises and study.

The decision was taken therefore to fill out these pages with a number of extracts from letters to his family and various friends in which Eugene speaks of his interior life and spiritual journey in a much more concrete and realistic way than in these retreat notes.

Concretely we have selected 21 extracts of letters to President de Mazenod, written especially in the years 1804 to 1807, which show us Eugene's life at Aix, and 53 extracts of letters to Mrs. de Mazenod, the greater part written between 1808 and 1812 in an effort to convince her he was serious about his vocation and to give her news of life in the seminary⁵. There will also be found, from the same period, eight extracts of letters to his sister Eugenie and six to his grandmother. There are also forty or so other extracts from letters to twenty other correspondents, including six to Forbin-Janson.

With regard to correspondence with his friends, the loss of several letters that were still extant at the end of the century is to be deplored; they all had their importance in demonstrating the evolution of Eugene's spiritual life before his entry into the seminary, especially his correspon-

⁵ As to the correspondence between Eugene and his mother from 1808 to 1812, Fr. Morabito writes: "In fact, the Founder's mother does not give way so easily, on the contrary, she resists her son's decision to the very end: her letters are there to prove it. For his part, Eugene defends his vocation, with all his strength, and with all possible arguments. We have here one of the finest pages of the story of his soul. We find there his intimate dispositions, the elevated sentiments he held concerning his priestly vocation, his love of the Church and of souls, his strength of character, united with his affection for his mother. It was a long struggle between the tenderness of a mother who would be guided by her heart alone and the irrevocable decision of a son who, for his part, silenced his heart so as to speak only with the voice of reason and faith. In short, it was a struggle between the voice of flesh and blood and the voice of the Spirit." Cf. *Je serai prêtre*, 1954, p. 120.

dence with Fr. B. Zinelli in the years 1797-1802, and then with Fr. Magy, Emmanuel Gaultier de Claubry, Miss Julie de Glandevès, Frs. Denis and Beylot, the Duke of Rohan-Chabot, etc.⁶

The Principal Stages of Eugene's Spiritual Life

As we read the pages of these volumes we can trace the principal stages of Eugene's interior life.

1794-1807: quest for a state of life.

We publish but 21 texts from the period 1804-1807 and only two from the period before 1804. If we leave aside the Venice profession of faith (doc.1), Eugene's first extant writings date from 1799⁷. But in the hundred or so letters written between 1799 and 1804, Eugene speaks but rarely about his interior life and about religion. The Duchess of Cannizzaro's piety and charity edify him in the period 1799-1802, the religious scene in Aix and France arouse his curiosity and interest in the years 1802-1803; at that time he even passes scornful remarks on the misbehavior of the Cannizzaro sons, but he reveals practically nothing about his religious practice and spiritual life although it was fairly active. He gives the reason for this in his letter to François de Cannizzaro in 1816: "What a pity you have never really known the generous Master who is continually showering you with his gifts; if only I had done more when I had the power to influence your mind, as you had my heart, to make known all I knew of his infinite perfections, recount some of the marvels that grace had worked in my favour (although quite definitely I scarcely merited it), inspire in you the same respect and attachment towards religion that I had deep down in the depths of my heart but all too often stifled; who knows, perhaps today you would have less to reproach yourself with, and I would have an extra consolation, that of having contributed to gaining for you a happiness more durable than all the pleasures that now surround you and that you will have to leave behind; but unfortunately at 17 or 18 one does not always listen to reason" (doc.136)

The spiritual life of President de Mazenod, whose influence on Eugene was so deep, was at that time far ahead of his son's. In each of his

⁶ In his biography of Bishop de Mazenod, Father Rey mentions them and copies some portions. cf. Vol. I, pp. 63, 70-71, 81-82, 84-90, 97-98, 100, 103, etc.

⁷ For the most part Rey and Rambert did not know of the existence of these. On their discovery after the war, see J. Pierlorz, *La découverte des premières lettres du Fondateur*, in *Vie Oblate Life*, vol. 44 (1985), pp. 79-83.

very many letters, almost all of which are extant, Charles Antoine finds an opportunity to make some remarks of a moral nature, to testify to his attachment to the Church and especially to affirm, no matter what happens, his entire submission to divine Providence.

Uncle Fortuné, few of whose letters from the years 1799-1803 survive, bears witness to the same supernatural spirit, and in a letter dated October 15, 1802, he gives us a good description of the spiritual condition of his nephew at the time he left Sicily: "I too will not cease from begging God each day for your constant perseverance in the honourable and religious sentiments which have always underlain all your actions and earned you everyone's approval in foreign lands. Knowing as I do the sensitivity of your moral code and your outspokenness, I cannot over-stress my advice that you tone down your zeal when confronted with a mob of empty-headed and corrupt young people whose principles a dozen years of revolution have quite debased. I can assure you that at your age exemplary behaviour and often silence are the best ways to rebuke vice ... Do not waver in your honest ways and exemplary Christian life, and divine Providence will never desert you. You have seen for yourself how much Providence did for us in our distress and with what tender solicitude God comes to the help of those who place all their confidence in him ..."

The first two years spent in France were a heavy trial for Eugene. The memory of his loved ones in Sicily stayed with him, while it took him quite a long time to get to understand and be understood by his mother and his uncle Roze-Joannis and then to settle down to life in Aix. But from 1804 one begins to see him entering into his new environment and taking more and more interest in religious issues; he is very ready to discuss them especially with his father, who was at that time his principal correspondent and confidant.

To begin with he enters into the life of the Church at Aix, and he soon sees himself as a living member of it. One is even surprised to find such expressions flowing from his pen, from March 1804 onward, as: "We are going to set up a seminary", "On Saturday we will ordain a priest and deacon", etc. (docs. 4&5). Then he comes to the defence of Pope Pius VII who signed the 1802 concordat (docs 10&23); he is awed by the catholicity of the Church and the dogma of the communion of saints (docs. 7 & 22). To defend the Church's teaching against his uncle Roze-Joannis he must deepen his religious knowledge: "A simple layman," he writes in his note on Jansenism, "I apply myself to my religion as I consider this study to be the first and most essential of my duties ... I drew from the Councils and the writings of the holy Fathers pure catholic doctrine" (docs.

15&16)⁸. One cannot but admire the pertinent comments he makes in 1805 on the *Genius of Christianity of Chateaubriand* (doc. 8) or, in 1806, on a sermon by Canon Blanche who sings the praises of French arms instead of preaching "Jesus Christ crucified" (doc. 19), his knowledge of Sacred Scripture and his religious convictions (docs. 13&11), etc.

One has furthermore a sense of his feeling hurt by the ill-repute of the Catholic colleges in Paris (doc. 10) or again by the thought of knowing that some friends might die without the sacraments; he does all he can to help them to a happy death (docs. 9, 10, 20, 21). He writes in 1805, on the occasion of the death of the Countess of Vintimille: "You would not believe the effect it has on me when people of that generation die, although it was already degenerating compared with that which preceded it. I am really afraid that tradition and virtuous example are going to vanish from the scene altogether. I shudder at the very idea that we will one day be reduced just to our own, a perverse generation which has imbibed nothing but the poison of every vice and despises virtue, which stagnates in such a depth of ignorance that there is good reason to fear that we will fall again into a state of barbarism even more wicked than that which prevailed in the sixth century, since at least in that unhappy time people did believe in God, while today there is an open profession of an appalling atheism" (doc. 9).

To these sound principles and healthy reflections, Eugene adds good works. He accepts, at the end of 1806 and the beginning of 1807, the office of prison visitor (doc.21) and becomes part of a project which aims to give catechism to children in the country-side⁹.

In the light of these facts it is no surprise that, from 1804, Eugene seems to lay aside the idea of marriage (doc. 6), and can say in 1806: "As to myself, it is more than likely that my father's absence has set my destiny on a course quite opposed to what my heart, in the past so eager for glory, seemed to hold out for me" (doc. 18); and finally he can write to

⁸ He seems indeed to have embarked on a methodical course of study at that time (doc. 8, note 37); he probably joined the Cercle des Phocéens (cf. Ruffo de Bonneval to Eugene, April 14, 1807; Eugene to his father, December 26, 1807); he was even one of the founders of the Society of friends of the sciences, letters, agriculture and the arts, cf. Postulation Archives, DM VII-4a.

⁹ Rey I, 54-55. Eugene seems to be quite in touch with the state of affairs at Aix; on February 13, 1809 he writes to his mother: "I take very well to the conducting of the catechetical classes that have enjoyed a lot of success at St. Sulpice for more than a hundred years, with a view, God willing, to setting them up at Aix where people have no idea at all about what catechism should be" (doc. 45).

his friend Emmanuel Gaultier de Chaubry in December 1807: "And now, shall I speak of myself? Yes, but only to ask for your prayers and get your explicit promise to persevere in asking God to accomplish in my regard the adorable designs whose outcome I impede by my infidelities; that he might knock, prune, reduce me to desiring only what He wills, that He might overturn all the obstacles standing in the way of my arriving at a more perfect state to which I strongly believe I am called ..." (doc.22)

1808-1811: preparation for the priesthood

Seventy-eight documents are published, written between 1808 and 1811. They are particularly numerous for the years 1808-1809, a time when the seminarist has to struggle with homesickness, living with the knowledge especially that his mother and grandmother had difficulty in letting him go. He is continually finding new arguments to convince his mother of the reality of God's call; she will resign herself to it only when faced with the *fait accompli* of her son's ordination in December 1811.

In this portion of Eugene's writings we will come across some very beautiful passages where his love of the Church, joy and sense of wonder as he came to a better understanding of how God loved him or deepened his grasp of the nature of sacred orders, his enthusiasm and zeal in all he does, all shine through. Unfailingly edified by his mentors and colleagues, these are years in which he acquires a stamp as priest and man of the Church that will be his throughout life.

1812-1831: formation of the apostolic man

Sixty-two documents cover the years 1812-1831. The retreat notes, the rule and the letters of 1812-1815 reveal the difficult and even harrowing stages Fr. de Mazenod must pass through in his search for an equilibrium between the life of prayer and study that he asked of himself and that he strove to perfect, and on the other hand the ever more demanding apostolic life that circumstances dictated and which impel him, captured by his zeal, to "fight until death for the greater glory of God"¹⁰.

The grave illness of 1814, the foundation of the Missionaries of Provence in 1815-1816, the choice of religious life in 1818, all led him gradually to the discovery of the equilibrium of the apostolic man. The problem of a dichotomy in his life, if it still persists after 1818, comes up less often in Father de Mazenod's retreat notes and reflections.

¹⁰ Preface to the Rules.

Furthermore his more and more numerous engagements, as founder and missionary up to 1823, as vicar general of Marseilles from 1823-1836, gave him less and less time to speak about himself in his letters, while his retreats, except for those of 1831, 1832 and 1837, will almost always be made with the Marseilles clergy and no longer allow him to record his impressions and resolutions.

1832-1861: the Bishop's intense apostolic life

For the years 1832-1861 we have judged a mere 29 documents to be suitable for publication. Most were written in 1833-1835 and they give us some insights into the interior crisis Bishop de Mazenod passed through during the Icosia affair and his appointment to the bishopric of Marseilles.

After 1837 he does not seem to have written any more retreat notes; it is in his journal and occasionally his letters to Oblates that he lifts here and there a corner of the veil and reveals something of his interior life where there was never any shortage of sufferings; but now it is no longer he who chooses what his penances will be; they are imposed upon him by the Holy Spirit and events, by the duties of his dual responsibility as bishop and superior general: religious ceremonies, a flow of visitors, apostolic and economic preoccupations, correspondence with Oblates scattered over four continents, etc.

Thus we find him writing to Father Richard, January 18, 1852: "You couldn't conceive the slavery I'm reduced to. I declare that no one is less free than I am. I am compelled to go from one pre-determined task to another ..." Likewise on August 1, 1853, he writes to Father Vincens: "Young people of good will, you will not succeed in making me feel guilty, distressed as I am that I cannot do more. When one gets up at 5 o'clock in the morning, and one goes to bed about midnight, when one does not allow oneself a half hour walk, when one is from dawn to dusk at the service of everybody and when one spends at one's desk, pen in hand, all the time of which demands or tactless interruptions do not rob one, one cannot reproach oneself for not doing one's duty. It would be impossible to want more than that" ¹¹

After the period of major passive purifications of the years 1829-1836 (sickness, the Icosia affair, Vèze, etc.) Bishop de Mazenod's union with the Lord, especially in the eucharist, and several extraordinary mys-

¹¹ *Oblate Writings II*, pp. 72 and 157.

tical phenomena like the gift of tears, ineffable moments of joy and peace, prophetic intuitions, allow one to affirm that the purifications and his efforts at a virtuous life have led him to a habitual and intimate union with God¹².

Reflections on Two Major Themes Running Through These Texts

Bishop de Mazenod's spiritual writings are rich in content and Oblates have already acquired familiarity with many passages cited in serious studies and theses on Eugene's spiritual life in general¹³ or in monographic works¹⁴. Even so I would like to offer some reflections and an introduction to two of the major themes of these pages: the sense of personal sin and the quest for perfection.

The sense of personal sin.

— *The expressions he uses.*

When reading the spiritual writings of Blessed Eugene, especially his retreat notes of 1808 to 1837, one is struck by the number of times he speaks of sin, of his life of sin, and by the strength of the experiences he uses.

While before entering the seminary Eugene did sometimes speak of sin, it is in his first retreat in October 1808 that, for the first time, he speaks of his life of sin.

Let us look at some of the expressions he uses. To begin with he acknowledges he is unworthy to live among the saints who live in the seminary: "I must abase myself profoundly in view of iniquities which should

¹² J. Leflon, op. cit., vol. 4, pp. 306-337; Y. Beaudoin, *The spiritual journey of Bl. E. de Mazenod as related to the Oblate Congregation's life and development*, in *Vie Oblate Life*, v. 47 (1908), pp. 242-256.

¹³ J. Pierlorz, *La vie spirituelle de Mgr Mazenod ... 1782-1812*, Rome, 1955; A. Tache, *La vie spirituelle d'Eugene de Mazenod ... 1812-1818*, Rome, 1960; R. Moosbrugger, *The spirituality of Bl. E. de Mazenod ... 1818-1837*, Rome, 1980; L.-N. Boutin, *La spiritualite de Mgr de Mazenod*, Chambly, 1966.

¹⁴ G. Morabito, *Je serai prêtre*, Ottawa, 1954; A. D'Addio, *Cristo crocifisso e la Chiesa abbandonata. E. de Mazenod: un appassionato di Cristo e della Chiesa*, Quaderni di Vermicino, 1978, n.4; G. Mammana, *La Chiesa nella vita e nel pensiero di E. de Mazenod*, Quaderni di Vermicino, 1979, n.7; K. Lubowicki, *Maria nella vita del beato E. de Mazenod e della sua Congregazione*, Frascati, 1988; Id., *Mystère et dynamique de l'amour dans la vie du bx E. de Mazenod*, Rome, 1990. Other works or theses draw especially on the letters, etc.

In these various works the references are not easy to find; aiming at greater precision, after indicating the archival classification, I have placed the page number of the manuscript, at least for texts consisting of more than one page.

have closed to me for ever entrance into the sanctuary. My sins must be always before me so as never to forget that I am last of all in the eyes of the just God ...; if men could only see me as I really am, however great their charity, they would not be able to put up with me" (doc. 28). He adds that the Lord snatched him "from the hands of the devil", "from the jaws of hell", "rescued him from vice" (ibid).

After that he scarcely ever refers to his sins until his ordination retreat of December, 1811 (doc. 95). On this occasion he employs language that is even more explicit and stronger than in 1808: "By my past iniquities ... I dedicated myself to the devil and his perverse works ... Thus I am a sinner, I know it, a great, a very great sinner ..." "I will meditate ... on sin, on horrible, dreadful mortal sin, in which for so long I took pleasure, or rather, under whose empire I groaned for a period of years." "I soiled your image, see how I insulted your love, before realizing what sin was and Who it was I was offending ... That soul you gave me to praise you with, bless you with, love you with, scorned you, insulted your kindnesses ... turned its back on you and plunged into a filthy slough ..., You, infinite Majesty, offended, outraged by this stinking little worm, this revolting putrescence ...," "I, the black sheep, I the revolting leper ..." The Lord came "to lead me out of the slough where I was sinking" ... Without grace "I would still be wallowing in my sewer or perhaps I would have perished," etc.

After that it is in the very important retreat of December, 1814 (doc. 130), before the founding of the Congregation, that Eugene speaks most of his past sins and enters into various details, amongst others it is on this occasion that he mentions explicitly, for the first time, his grace of conversion of Good Friday, 1807: "Can I forget the bitter tears that the sight of the cross made stream from my eyes one Good Friday? ... I was in a state of mortal sin and it was precisely this that made me sad" (doc. 130). "... I, a priest, I who was for so long, over so many years, knowingly, willingly, stubbornly the slave of the devil, the enemy of God, ... God makes use of some mud, worse than that — of vile excrement to accomplish a great work ... My place was certainly not in the sanctuary [... but] outside the church, with the dogs, in the outermost row of penitents; this was as far as my ambition could stretch ..." etc.

Eugene will have more to say throughout his life about his sins, but in a less strident voice. This selection of texts will suffice to give the reader an idea of what we are dealing with here: the sense of personal sin, deeply felt and expressed with a realism that is difficult to understand today.

— What sins?

Is it lacking in discretion to inquire into Eugene's "life of sin", or at least into what meaning is to be given to what he says?

We have already read Canon Leflon's interpretation. Eugene himself, in his rule of 1812, thought it wise to give an explanation in which he goes some way to muting the force of the expressions: "As today the most secret documents, ones which should command the highest respect, are at risk to be rifled, read and published by the myrmidons of the police [of Napoleon]", he writes, "I feel I should add this note for these Gentlemen, in something I am writing for own eyes only: namely, that when I speak of "my crimes", this is to be taken to mean grave faults which I acknowledge I had the misfortune to commit against God in the secrecy of my conscience, so that, although it can be said in all truth that before God I am a very great sinner, I could nevertheless maintain when faced by persons for whom this language has no meaning, if I thought as they do, that I am a better man than they are, for not only have I never been guilty of theft, of murder, nor done anything in anyway wrong or harmful to anybody at all in the whole wide world, not only have I never taken anyone's wife, something at which really decent people in the world would draw the line at, but in addition I have always based my beliefs and actions on this principle, that both reason and religion categorically require one to abstain from coveting what belongs to another, and never to consent to do anything with anybody at all which they could be sorry for later: in short, that I have never given any scandal of any kind nor at any period of my life. I call upon all those who have known me in every country where I have lived to confirm this" (doc. 109).

Eugene then is speaking here in all simplicity: he has never given "any scandal of any kind nor at any period" of his life. Quite specifically, at least four times, he makes the point that he has never had anything to reproach himself with in regard to women¹⁵.

Father Rambert has this to say on the subject: "In spite of the dangers and temptations he was exposed to [in Sicily and on his return to Aix] on account of his personal attractiveness, fiery temperament, and over-sensitive heart, thanks to these privileged graces and his generous cooperation with them he was able to affirm that, notwithstanding the

¹⁵ Cf. *Missions OMI* 1866, pp. 302-303; 1811 retreat, doc. 95; 1814 retreat. doc. 130; 1818 retreat, doc. 145.

snare laid to entrap him in his innocence, he had not to reproach himself with the least fault against the angelic virtue."

In his work *I Will Be a Priest*, Father Morabito remarked that Rambert goes beyond what the Founder himself affirms: the Founder never said he had not to reproach himself with any fault against the angelic virtue. "In fact," he writes, "we think that it is a question of certain youthful weaknesses he experienced in the world while still living a thoroughly good Christian life"¹⁶. At the time Father Morabito received several letters of protest from Oblates who accused him of being wanting in discretion and respect. But there was not really anything to be shocked at in all this in light of the fact that faults against the sixth and ninth commandments were for so long a period the main matter of confession.

Eugene himself never entered into any more detail. The fact is, however, that several of the expressions in his retreat notes were ones normally used at that time by spiritual authors and preachers to speak in a general way about impurity: stinking little worm, revolting putrescence, black sheep, slough ... sewer, uninterrupted repetition of criminal actions, this body which has so often drawn my soul into excesses which have made it the irreconcilable enemy of God, etc.

In recent times a much more daring interpretation has been mooted in some Oblate circles. With a faulty understanding of the Founder's psychology and style, while they do not speak of explicit homosexuality, they do say that Eugene had at least tendencies in that direction.

We must protest unequivocally against this interpretation which has no serious historical basis. François Vèze's accusations in 1838¹⁷ lend no credibility to this accusation, nor do Eugene's several affirmations that he had never sinned with women. Homosexuality was unthinkable in Eugene's time and in a milieu still strongly under the influence of Jansenism, and especially in his case as he had always had a very delicate conscience. One has but to read his extremely detailed examinations of conscience (doc. 109, and doc. 157) to come to the conclusion that he

¹⁶ Rambert I, 26; Morabito, *Je serai prêtre*, pp. 49, 52-53.

¹⁷ Former servant at the bishop's palace, dismissed by Father Tempier because of his impossible temperament, Vèze had his revenge on the Bishop by causing a commotion during a religious ceremony at Roquevaire and slandering him as "brigand, scoundrel or beggar, sodomist". Vèze was condemned by the Marseilles tribunal, then by that at Aix. The affair was studied in depth to satisfy the requirements of the cause for canonization, cf. *Inquisito historica*, 1968, pp. 515-568. It is quite sure that Bishop de Mazenod emerges from this affair without any stain on his moral character; it was, however, a time of humiliation and purification for him.

might easily have been subject to scruples if one were not aware from other sources that his trust in God's infinite mercy always kept him on an even keel¹⁸.

Some Oblates with little insight into the sensitivity of Eugene's heart could be put off by the highly-colored tone of some of his expressions in letters to individual Oblates, especially to Father Suzanne¹⁹; or again by some of his confessions of loving his friends too tenderly (doc. 95), including some members of the Aix Youth Association and some Oblates (doc. 130 and doc. 145). He expresses himself very frankly on these points in his retreats of 1811, 1814, and 1818, but it is clear that one must not exaggerate the culpability he accuses himself of. He was simply taking note that he had a tendency to give more of his love to those who showed him more affection and gratitude, or again he feared holding something back in his heart that belonged to the absolute love of God²⁰.

He acknowledged that his heart often brought him sufferings, but he does not renounce it. He spoke about this many times, in particular in his *Journal* under the date September 4, 1837. He writes: "I must say that I cannot conceive how anyone can love God who cannot love men who are worthy of love. In view of this it will be clear that I have no intention of disavowing my feelings. Let anyone who would be tempted to find fault with me know that I do not think much of his judgment and that I would try very hard to prove that I have every reason to thank God for having given me a soul better able to understand that of Jesus Christ our Master who made us, who animates and inspires my own, than these cold and egoistic men of reason who seem to locate their hearts in their skulls and can love no one because in the last analysis they love only themselves ... Study St. John, above all get to know what the loving heart of Jesus Christ has to give not merely to humanity in general but concretely to his Apostles and disciples, and see then if anyone dare come and preach a speculative love void of feeling and affection ..."²¹.

But do we in fact have to guess at what Eugene de Mazenod really considered to be grave sin in his life? No. We know at least some of his

¹⁸ Cf. Thesis of Father K. Lubowicki, *Mystère et dynamique de l'amour dans la vie du bx E. de Mazenod*, Rome, 1990.

¹⁹ Cf. *Infra*, doc. 158 and 159 and *Oblate Writings* 6, pp. 65-69, 81, 96-97.

²⁰ Cf. E. Lamirande, *Aspects du coeur de Mgr de Mazenod*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t.13 (1954), pp. 261-286.

²¹ E. Lamirande, *op cit.*, gives several texts on this topic.

faults. He went about in the world, to balls, the theatre, at Palermo and especially on his return to Aix. This in itself at that time was considered a grave sin. Eugene says it expressly in a dozen letters, written between 1808 and 1811, in which he begs his sister, already a married lady, not to go to dances, not to go to the theatres, etc.²²

In Sicily, he hardly mentions dances, but he writes in his *Journal*: “I could say a lot about the depraved morals of Palermo’s high society, I will not talk about it; I wish only to record God’s infinite generosity: with his powerful grace he continually preserved me in the midst of really serious danger, inspiring me not simply to distance myself from, but to hold as it were in horror, any kind of dissipation that lures one into the errors that I deplore in others ...”²³

At Aix, in 1803 and at the beginning of 1804, he seems indeed to have entered into fashionable society with some degree of interest. He writes to his father on January 27, 1804: “But if I found St. Laurent dull, what could equal the pleasures the charming town of Aix has to offer? As well as the Odeon ... where we get together twice a week to sing and dance, we often have plays. I say plays but they are more like operas ...” On February 16 he adds: “If anyone is bored at Aix it is his own fault; so I blame no one for what I am going through. There is everything: concerts, picnics, evening-dress balls, masked balls, teas, suppers, society plays, new light comedies ...”²⁴

Eugene liked to exaggerate, if only to amuse his father. Clearly in the above passage he intends to mock this style of life that he is familiar with without getting over-involved in it, since on April 12th following he will say again that he sometimes remains “three weeks without going out” (doc. 5). At the same time he did go out sometimes, but he often declares that his behaviour was always exemplary. In 1805 he grumbles about his mother. She is afraid that he is going on the town and wants to linger on in Paris. He makes the comment: “if the fulfillment of every duty, if the putting away of all distractions, if finally moderation on every occasion can be a title to obtain [her trust] ...” she should not have anything to worry about.²⁵

²² Cf. *infra*, doc. 32.; 35; 43; 44; 63; 78, etc.

²³ *Missions OMI* 1866, p. 294.

²⁴ Orig. Aix, bibl. Méjanès, papiers Boisgelin B 69.

²⁵ Eugene to his father, September 3, doc. 11; his uncle Roze-Joannis was amazed that with his “firm and decisive character, and with as severe as his principles” Eugene was not one of the most zealous of Jansenists, see doc. 16; on January 19, 1807, Eugene again writes to his father that he “has never committed any acts of folly”, doc. 21.

On April 14, 1810, Eugene, confiding in his mother who is begging him to come back to Aix after two years in the seminary, makes a significant statement. He writes: "Although living in society I should have tried to keep away from anything I thought was contrary to God's law or opposed to evangelical morality, do you think anyone could place much trust in a person who has been seen practically the night before in noisy parties, sharing at least passively in the dissipation that is the rule among worldly people?" (doc. 68).

— Why did he consider himself to be such a great sinner?

We have a clear confession: he shared, passively, the dissipation of the noisy parties of worldly people. In Eugene's case this mixing with the world "at least passively" took on in retrospect a specially grave character for a special reason: since his adolescence the Lord had called him to the priesthood. This call might have been barely perceptible, almost forgotten, at various moments of his life, but it always made itself heard afresh. Eugene plainly states that he believed he recognized God's call from the time of his adolescence²⁶. He adds in his exile Journal: "This vocation could not come to fruition until much later; I had more trials to undergo. If we had stayed one more year at Venice ... I would have followed my saintly director ... into the religious Congregation that he chose ..." ²⁷ His desire to become a priest was so well known amongst the French community at Venice that Archbishop Raillon of Aix wrote to Nuncio in Paris during the Icosia affair, on February 6, 1834: "I knew him in Italy, when he was very young, not yet twenty. He already displayed a pious disposition and a desire to enter the Church."²⁸

Don Bartolo Zinelli nurtured this vocation subsequently by means of regular letters to Naples and Palermo. At the end of the last century some of his letters written in 1798 and 1801-1802 were still extant. On January 24, 1798, he tactfully told Eugene: "You have reached the age when one must think about what one will do with one's life. Seek God's direction on this important matter." On October 12, 1801, he added: "With your temperament you will not be satisfied with half-measures; you will do much good or evil ... Allow me to give you these two maxims that I try to drum into young people: nothing against God, nothing without God."²⁹. One of

²⁶ *Memoires*, in Rambert I, 161; Eugene to his mother, February 28, 1809, doc. 46.

²⁷ *Missions OMI* 1866, p. 129 and Rey I, 27.

²⁸ Orig.: Rome, ASV, Secretariate of State 14 (248): 1834.

²⁹ Rey I, 35-36, 38, 43-44.

the first resolutions he will make as a seminarian, in October 1808, will be precisely that: "Nothing against God" (doc. 28). In Don Bartolo's last letter, written shortly before his death in 1802, he speaks again of vocation: "I would ask of you something greater than what you are presently doing, something greater again for the glory of God and the salvation of souls."³⁰

Thus it is difficult to imagine that Eugene could have completely forgotten his vocation in Sicily, up to his 20th birthday, since Don Bartolo reminded him continually of God's call.

At Aix we can say for certain that Eugene began to look seriously at his vocation at the end of 1806³¹. But already from the spring of 1804 he shows considerable interest in religious questions and the Church (doc. 4-20). Father Morabito has identified every possible allusion to Eugene's vocation in his letters from 1805-1808³². It can be said that he gave up his vocation in fact from spring 1802 to 1804 when he had more or less consented to marriage; in fact, he returned to France at the end of 1802 precisely because his mother had found him a future bride, who died however shortly after his return³³. But it would seem that he never completely forgot God's call, even if, because of other prospects, this call might have had little influence on him in 1802 or later in 1805³⁴. But to entertain thoughts about a state of life other than that towards which one is actually tending does not necessarily imply that the latter has been completely forgotten, and, in fact, in his retreat of 1811, Eugene wrote: "You have never ceased to talk to my heart" (doc. 95). or again, in 1814: "How often in my past life did my wounded, tormented heart throw itself towards God from whom it had turned away" (doc. 130). Although his focus here is on his movement away from God, one does see there with equal clarity a proof of the continuity of God's call which he had heard so clearly in his adolescence, a continuity affirmed by his first biographers and by Father Morabito³⁵.

³⁰ Rey I, 44-45.

³¹ Cf. Letters to his mother, March 23 and April 4, 1809, doc. 49 and 50.

³² Morabito, *Je serai prêtre*, pp. 92-102.

³³ In this sense one can acknowledge that Father J. Pierlorz was right in always maintaining that Eugene completely forgot his vocation for several years, cf. *La vie spirituelle de Mgr de Mazenod*, pp. 101, 106, 111; and *Vie Oblate Life*, t. 44 (1985), p. 83.

³⁴ Plan to make a military career in Sicily.

³⁵ Rey I, 27, 66; Rambert I, 16-17, 45; Baffie, *Esprit et vertus*, 3 and 4; Morabito, *Je serai prêtre*, p. 93. I share the opinion of Father Morabito who writes: "It seems that it is the problem of his vocation that recalls him to a more fervent spiritual life" (*Je serai prêtre*, p. 102). Leflon writes on the same lines: "We only know from himself that the reawakening of his vocation led to all the rest ..." (*op. cit.*, I, p. 279).

This is the reason, in my opinion, why the Founder saw himself as a sinner and a great one at that, namely - to use an expression he often employed - he resisted God's graces, over a period of several years he had been unfaithful to God's designs over him. Mixing, even passively, with the world was then considered a grave sin for everybody: it was an unpardonable act for one who had been and who still felt himself to be called to a greater perfection.

Here it seems to me we have a partial explanation for the strikingly strong expressions used by Eugene when he speaks of his life of sin. Over a long period he strove to remain faithful to his vocation, he experienced suffering. The memory of these stormy experiences is magnified in the seminary and as he begins his priesthood, when the delicacy of his conscience was heightened even more: hence his reactions and expressions, in which we see that in his eyes, as indeed is the case with every one of the saints with their vivid experience of God, sin was in a real sense an interior catastrophe without precedent because he belonged to God.

Complacency in evil is the worst state a soul can be in, and Eugene acknowledges that one of the great graces he has received is precisely this: God never left him in peace³⁶.

To conclude these reflections on sin, it can be asked why Bishop de Mazenod, who felt it so important that he leave behind for his Oblate sons a good image of himself³⁷, did not destroy, before his death, these retreat notes where he assumes the role of implacable accuser of his faults before God and man?³⁸

A long time before this perhaps he intended to give us his answer. In a spiritual talk given to the seminarians in 1810, we read: "The mercies of my God are infinite. Let us praise, make known, his bounty, for if it is

³⁶ Doc. 95: "You have never ceased speaking to my heart."

³⁷ He was, for example, happy to be proposed for the cardinal's hat and to receive a letter from Pius IX who assured him of this once circumstances permitted. He wrote at the time to Bishop Guibert, on February 10, 1860: "It is all I could desire. This brief will be enough in the Congregation's archives to do it honour before the Church." Orig., Postulation Archives, L M-Guibert.

³⁸ Eugene never explained why he wrote his reflections at the time of his retreats, but clearly it was with a view to re-reading them for his own edification or again to keep track of his progress or lack of it. In May, 1818, for example, he writes: "I have just re-read the reflections I made in July, 1816. I was surprised at the aptness", etc. (doc. 145). Below the short notes of his 1821 retreat he wrote later: "That beautiful retreat of 1821! Why did I not write it all down? ... When I think of all that happened, how I regret not keeping a record; what a lot of good it would have done me to re-read it today, now when I so badly need renewal"! (doc. 155).

good to keep the secrets of the King, says Scripture, it is honourable, or I will say rather it is a duty, to reveal and make known the works of God" (doc. 77). Thus he wanted to perform an act of humility over his self-love, something he acknowledges was very alive in him in his youth; above all he wanted to make known God's bounty and mercy towards himself. Father Morabito expressed it very well: "When one has done wrong, there are two ways in which one can make reparation: the first is to consign it to oblivion if it is a public sin, and to cover it in silence if it is secret; the second is to acknowledge one's sin, to abase oneself, to let people see what kind of a person one is, for one's own humiliation and for God's glory. The first is the way of ordinary souls, the second the way of the saints. The Founder chose the second: to highlight, through his own humiliation, God's glory and mercies towards his soul. Here we see why he left his Congregation all his intimate notes, carefully preserved between hard covers ..." ³⁹

The Struggle for Perfection

One of the words that recurs time and time again in Eugene's writings is, along with "sin", is that of "holiness". This word corresponds with a reality as profoundly rooted in him as the existence of sin. Beginning with 1807-1808, as already previously at Venice, he strives with all his being towards Christian perfection and holiness.

The initial impetus was given without doubt at the moment of his encounter with the crucified Christ on Good Friday, 1807, but he does not speak of this event with any clarity until 1814 (doc. 130). In his writings, the desire, the struggle towards holiness becomes apparent for the first time in a letter to his friend Emmanuel Gaultier in December, 1807: "May God overturn all the obstacles standing in the way of my aiming at a more perfect state to which I strongly believe I am called ... In a word may he make me worthy of the communion of saints and have me assume the place among them that he seems to have destined me for, but which it seems to me I am still far from deserving." (doc. 22)

³⁹ Morabito, *Je serai prêtre*, p. 67. The Oblates similarly did not dare to destroy these notes. Father Baffie, in *Esprit et vertus*, knew them well and cites parts of the them. It can be questioned whether Father Ortolan knew them, he being the man who caused many writings that he thought unedifying to vanish. Father Estève, second postulator of the cause of canonization, did not hesitate however to have all these notes copied and submitted, along with the other writings of the Founder, to the theological censors of the Congregation of Rites.

On his entry into the seminary Eugene considers himself “unworthy ... to live among the saints who make up this truly heavenly house”⁴⁰ (doc. 28); and so he feels the need to abase himself,⁴¹ to do penance, and to respond from then on with unfailing generosity to all the graces he receives. From the moment of his encounter with Christ crucified in 1807, the Lord is and in ever-increasing measure will be the object of his love and imitation, but in a spiritual talk given on March 19, 1809, he points to the infinite distance separating him from the holiness of his model whom had failed to imitate in his innocence but whom he will strive to serve in his devotedness (doc. 48).

As ordination draws nearer, he understands more and more that a priest must share the holiness of Christ and of the Apostles (doc.66); that is why he wants “with God’s help to establish the work of his sanctification on solid and unshakeable foundations” so as to prepare him “to sanctify others while working for his own salvation” (doc.83). In this letter to his mother dated March 31, 1811, we have two of the principal motives that he returns to continually in his quest for sanctity: priesthood and apostolic life.

— Why the struggle for holiness?

He must seek it with all his strength and with every means available (doc. 102), for “the priesthood is a state of perfection that requires of those who have the happiness to be invested with it a scrupulous fidelity to the least movements of the Holy Spirit,” he writes in January 1812 (doc.103). For, he is convinced, especially after ordination, that he receives more than enough graces to make a great saint” (doc. 98).

Before returning to Aix in 1812, he writes to his mother: “Before finishing I want to let you know in advance that, in virtue of my state in life, I am obliged to seek after perfection, and therefore to take all available means to reach it” (doc. 108). Likewise in his retreat notes in 1814 we read: “because I am a priest, my sole concern must be to bring honour to the priestly character. Mine is a state of perfection. Have I really grasped it? ...” (doc. 130). On the contrary, he sees himself as being tepid, even a

⁴⁰ He will speak again of the example given by the directors and seminarians in August, 1812 (doc. 106).

⁴¹ Several times, especially when taking a new step, he speaks of humility as the ground of his spiritual life: when he enters the seminary (doc. 28), at the outset of his priestly life in 1812 (doc. 106) and when he was named bishop of Marseilles in 1837 (doc. 185).

persistent sinner. He adds: "Mine is a strange kind of sloth! There has never perhaps been anyone who experiences a desire for perfection so often, and no one who has been so captured by the attractions of this happy state, and yet no one too who has been more unfaithful to the resolutions which relate to it."

At the time of this May 1824, retreat, Father Enfantin's instructions do not hold much interest for him. "My readings," he writes, "centred on the dignity, the sanctity of priesthood, the grievous quality of sin in priests, the danger of sinning and being lost if one is unfaithful to grace, negligent in the practice of virtue which should adorn the priest's soul continually and especially when the priest is one called to be a model, stay and support of those whom Providence confides to his direction, a priest whom God has awoken to the fact that the ordinary virtues do not suffice to accomplish the wonders which should accompany the works of his ministry, and who has sought out men of counsel the better to fulfill the precepts ..." (doc. 156).

During his episcopal ordination retreat in 1832, he begins by making a melancholy observation: he was holier in his first years of priestly life than he is today (doc. 166). And later on he adds: "I know that the priesthood I have been honoured with for 21 years is a state of perfection, and that the Church in elevating me to the episcopate must have believed me to be abundantly endowed with those virtues of which I can scarcely catch a glimpse in my soul or in which perhaps to my shame I am totally lacking, but what can I do except cite the words of the debtor in the Gospel: patientiam habe in me et omnia reddam tibi (Mt. 18, 26). Help me, Lord, and give me time, and I will try to become what you want me to be." Finally, in 1837, he accepts not without some fear the heavy responsibility of the diocese of Marseilles. He notes during his retreat: "It is what must needs be that God is imposing on me, let us be brave and count on his grace. For that above all it is necessary to work seriously at becoming a saint. This new phase of my life must be a time of complete renewal. Many times already I have made shipwreck of my resolutions. The opportunity is too favourable to be lost. Without this, what would become of me! ... I really need to reinvigorate my soul. God provides me with the opportunity since he imposes on me a weighty duty that I will be able to fulfill properly only by following in the footsteps of the saints. It is already a signal grace to understand this much; now I must respond to it and obtain the rest" (doc. 185, v. 15)

But like Christ and his disciples, Eugene feels called to apostolic life, to the total gift of himself for the salvation of souls. From his first years at

Aix he is convinced that the level of holiness of the souls entrusted to him depends in large part on his own holiness. In his December 1814 retreat he writes: "To work for the salvation of souls, I must be holy, very holy; lo, because without this it would be useless to try to convert anyone. How can one give what one has not got? it is from one's superabundance that one must give; 2o, a virtue that is mediocre would not survive in the midst of the world, even living as I do. It is vital that the lustre of the virtues of a priest be so bright that it dissipates every fog that would envelop him and penetrate the thickest of clouds ..." (doc. 130, v. 15)⁴².

In the course of a short retreat, made on October 30, 1818, on the eve of the first taking of vows in the Congregation, he made the following remark: "... on my fidelity in responding to God's grace, for this help is always in proportion to needs, depends perhaps the salvation of a multitude of souls. If I am fervent the community at whose head I am placed will grow in fervour and whole populations will feel the influence of this growth in zeal and love ..." (doc. 148, v. 15, p. 156).

In 1826, three years after withdrawing from the mission band to give himself to administration as vicar general, he makes this remark during an examination of conscience: "A consideration one must guard against forgetting is the inalienable obligation to seek perfection. This consideration will help me to come to see a host of sins of omission, for what holiness does not come within the apostolic vocation, I mean that which dedicates me to work unremittingly for the sanctification of souls with the means employed by the Apostles ..." (doc. 157, v. 15).

Again, in his 1837 retreat, he went over in his mind the various groups of the faithful in his diocese and took stock of his mission's extent and the zeal he would have to display: "This is where one will meet the greatest difficulties," he writes, "for if the holy bishops our predecessors found it very difficult to achieve any good in their dioceses ... what will it be today when there is scarcely any faith left amongst Christians! ..." (doc. 185, v. 15).

Finally, the decision taken with his confreres, in 1818, to pronounce vows and become religious increases yet more his desire, the obligation to become a saint: "Frankly, we must ourselves become saints", he wrote in his third letter to Father Tempier⁴³. In his retreat of May 1818, some months before the invitation to accept Notre Dame du Laus and the deci-

⁴² Here we have two considerations that he will return to often in the Oblate Rules and when writing to the Oblates.

sion to draw up Rules, he confides to his notebook: "The thought that engaged and beguiled me throughout my thanksgiving, is that I must be a saint, and what is surprising, this seemed so easy to me that I did not doubt that it had to be; a glance at the saints of our time like Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice and Blessed Alphonse de Liguori, seemed to give me encouragement and strength. The means one must take to achieve this, far from frightening me, confirmed me in this confidence, so easy were they. I saw the life of religious perfection, the observance of the evangelical counsels free from the difficulties I had hitherto found in them. I asked myself why, to the vows of chastity and obedience that I have made up to now, I did not add that of poverty, and running through my mind the various obligations that evangelical poverty would entail, there are none that make me draw back ... This attraction towards a perfection of which no models are available to me, in a country which no longer knows the meaning of perfection but takes fright at anything, etc., this attraction which leads me to find such charm in the stories of the saints' actions, which gives me such lively desires to imitate them, which gives me a sense of being confined, which makes me feel very frustrated because I cannot do all the Lord inspires me to, this attraction deserves my attention, a closer examination, in short for me to pursue it without further ado ..." (doc. 145, v. 15).

In 1824 he regrets that, because of his responsibility as vicar general, he can no longer live in an Oblate community to be edified by contact with Oblates who "all have in comparably more virtue" than himself. He adds: "I will therefore always live in spirit in the most intimate union with them, and while waiting for the possibility of setting up at Marseilles a regular house which procures us some part of the advantages that are found in abundance in our dear house at Aix, so far as I can I will observe the Rule on my own ..." (doc. 156, v. 15).

In his retreat at the end of October 1831, he is meditating on the Rules and composes a commentary on them. After copying this phrase from the preface: *Serio sanctitati suae incumbere habent*, etc., he writes: "Can one conceive anything more perfect on the face of the earth? Re-read this paragraph attentively, and when you have done that re-read it again. In the judgement of the Church, this is what we must be if we are to

⁴³ Letter dated December 13, 1815, in *Oblate Writings*, 6, 2.

embrace the ministry we are called to and if we are to respond with fidelity to our holy vocation. At least we must seek this perfection with all the powers of our soul. It concerns our salvation. We are dedicated, consecrated to it, on entering the Congregation. Happy necessity!" (doc. 163, v. 15). A few lines further on he makes a reflection analogous to that of his examination of conscience of 1826: "A second consideration based likewise on the end of our Institute enables me to discover to my great shame a lot of omissions. I refer to the fact that we are called so far as we can to supply for the various religious orders that were destroyed by the Revolution. In light of that, what perfection are we called to? to the perfection of each suppressed Order. Perfection cannot be defined in a more extended sense. And that is the end of our Institute. It fills me with confusion to have understood it so badly! ..." (doc. 157, v. 15).

- Nature of Perfection. Means employed by Eugene.

Desire for holiness and efforts to become perfect come through in Eugene's life as a constant and almost natural theme. Moreover the example of the saints had captured him (doc. 139, v. 15, 146). He always tried to imitate them (doc. 145) and always prayed to them (doc. 85, 183).

In a letter to his friend d'Albertas in 1820, he writes that it is easy to become a saint: it is enough to want it and to take the necessary means. The shortest road, he adds is "to serve God with love and gratitude" (doc. 153, v. 15). But he reached the point of being able to give this advice only after years of searching and suffering.

Eugene never liked half-measures. He wrote, e.g., when he entered the seminary: "Can there be any doubt that I stand in very great need of penance ... In light of the enormity and number of my faults, this expiation must be the business and occupation of the whole of my life" (doc. 28). This idea of penitential life returns in all his retreats, especially during his first years of priesthood. At that time he tried to imitate the corporal penances of the monks and at the same time the numerous penances that are incidental to apostolic life, to such an extent that in 1816-1818 in particular his body gave way⁴⁴. The illnesses, the wise advice first of Father Tempier and later of his uncle Fortuné, led him to understand that apostolic life, in union with Christ, is quite enough in itself to provide an

⁴⁴ His numerous bouts of sickness, in 1818-1819, are often described by Fortuné de Mazenod, cf. Y. Beaudoïn, *Le retour d'exil des Mazenod in 1818, II - Le Fondateur: sa santé, son caractère, ses vertus*, in *Vie Oblate Life*, t.45 (1986), pp. 411-422.

endless number of corporal and interior penances, which configure one as victim with Christ without any need of adding extraordinary and artificial penances⁴⁵.

The same dilemma posed itself, over a still longer period, with regard to his love of God and love of neighbor, and likewise as to what means to employ to reach perfection and, indirectly, concerning the nature of the perfection God called him to personally. Clearly he grasped that holiness consists in becoming another Jesus Christ, the Holy One par excellence.

Eugene speaks hundreds of times about Jesus in his spiritual writings. But what he saw first and foremost was a Jesus united with his Father through prayer and contemplation (doc. 130, v. 15), to such an extent that on many occasions, between 1814 and 1817, the young priest questioned whether he should enter an Order where his sole occupation would be his own salvation⁴⁶. From this, while still living at Aix and working with the people, came his decision to adopt means which tended towards this kind of perfection: frequenting the sacraments, especially the eucharist, which he preached continually to his mother and sister⁴⁷, prayer, the principal means for the priest's sanctification (doc. 107, v. 15), penances (doc. 109), examination of conscience "to consolidate one's vocation" (doc. 109, p.), confession "to persevere in virtue" (doc. 109, p.), all the many pious exercises structured according to a strict discipline to which he must remain faithful "to arrive at perfection and remain in it" (doc. 109), etc.

His programme of study and prayer was so crowded, in 1813-1816, that he was no longer able to find a balance between time consecrated to contemplation and time devoted to action. He was constantly accusing himself, first of lacking in zeal towards and love of neighbor, especially after receiving letters from this hyper-active friend Forbin-Janson, to whom he used to say that compared with him he did not accomplish a hundredth part of his work (doc. 116, v. 15), and at other times, and this was most frequent in 1813-1816, he condemned himself for infidelity to his own program. In his 1813 retreat he even ponders taking a vow of strict observance as to his program of study and prayer (doc. 121, v. 15).

⁴⁵ It is pointless to give references. Eugene speaks of his penances in every one of his retreat notes.

⁴⁶ Cf. E. Lamirande, *Les "deux parts" dans la vie de l'homme apostolique d'après Mgr de Mazenod*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t.25 (1966), pp. 177-204; and H. Verkin, *Note supplémentaire sur l'amour de la solitude du Fondateur*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t.26 (1967), pp. 383-388.

⁴⁷ Cf. doc. 35, 37, 43, 57, 76, 78, 90, 92, 93, etc.

Thus it is through heavy interior suffering and serious illnesses that little by little he discovered the means to perfection, as he discovered the nature of the holiness to which God was calling him in his own state of life.

His first ray of light in this matter came during his 1814 retreat. It helped especially to quieten his state of dissatisfaction concerning an apostolate he finds too limited and, what is more, against the grain. "Our perfection does not consist only in doing great things for God," he writes, "but especially in doing his will; and so when it is his will that we cannot perform certain works, etc., this very impotence, properly directed, can have a greater value in God's eyes than these brilliant works, etc., than long prayers, etc." In 1816 he adds along the same lines: "I must really be persuaded that although God makes use of men for his works, he does not need them. And so I will make a lot more progress in what he deigns to confide to me if I live infinitely more in dependence on him and worry less about a successful outcome. A little more prayer, a little less worry and control ..." (doc. 130, v. 15 & doc. 139).

During the 1816 retreat, he obtains a better perspective on another essential aspect of the perfection of his state. This very important text merits to be quoted in its entirety: "I must above all be really concerned that I am doing God's will when I give myself to the service of my neighbor, immerse myself in the external business of our house, etc., and I can do my best without worrying if, in doing work of this kind, I am unable to do other things which I would perhaps find more to my taste and seem more directly adapted to my own sanctification. If, e.g., at some time when I am attracted to contemplate God's mercy in his sacrament, someone comes for confession, I must leave Our Lord without complaint and regret to fulfill this duty of charity imposed by his will. Or again, if, tired out body and soul, I want to look for some rest in a good book or in prayer, etc., and the business of the house obliges me to go on some boring errand or make some tedious visit, persuaded that preference must always be given to what God requires over what one would oneself desire, etc., I will not hesitate, and I will do it with such good grace that, supposing I had the choice, I would prefer what the service that God has confided to me requires to what I would have a greater personal liking for. Better again, I will try to arrive at a loving preference for what is conformed to the will of the Master, which alone must rule not only my actions, but even my affections. If I reach that point, the battle is won" (doc. 139, v. 15).

Thus what he gradually discovers is that the perfection to which God calls him is that of an apostle. That is why he must imitate Jesus Christ in

his public life⁴⁸, and he will have to sanctify himself in and by apostolic work. That is God's will for him, he recognizes already in 1814 (doc. 127, v. 15), "this neighbor I must love, whom I wish to serve in soul and body, dissipates me, upsets my arrangements; when I go back home after being with him, I am no longer good for anything. It should not be like that. What did the saints do? Let us enter into their style and put it into practice, for, since I must live in the midst of the world, and my position compels me to have dealings with so many people great and small, it is essential for me that this kind of ministry be well regulated and help me to grow in perfection rather than take me away from it" (doc. 130, v. 15).

If for some years he hesitated between the purely contemplative life and the active life, his choice becomes clearer in 1816 (doc. 137, v. 15) and is made definitive in 1818. "I must," he writes, "continue to give up entirely my likings that would lead me into a life of retirement ..., I must consecrate myself afresh and for ever to the service of my neighbour ..." ⁴⁹.

Notwithstanding the disappointments and obstacles he will encounter in his ministry at various moments of his life⁵⁰, he will remain firmly in this orientation that God's will will make even more explicit by his appointment as vicar general of Marseilles in 1823 and to the diocese in 1837. "How often have I not been tempted to abandon all and busy myself only with my soul," he groans even so in May, 1824. "But no: I am told I must save it by continuing to busy myself with others" (doc. 156, v. 15). The same reflection appears again in 1837: "I must achieve my salvation through my flock, I must save myself with them" (doc. 185, v. 15).

These lights on his state of life and the kind of sanctity God called him to, little by little brought him interior peace. Already in his 1817 retreat he seemed more serene: he said he will follow the prayer schedule of the community as best he can and do all the good he can outside. What matters above all, he wrote, is "to perform all my actions before God without losing for an instant his holy presence, to be very careful to offer him all the upset plans my service of neighbour occasions" (doc. 144, v. 15) To live in this way united to God in action, prayer remains an essential moment and means but, there too, he plans henceforth to meditate especially on the virtues of the apostolic life (doc. 146), or again on the

⁴⁸ Cf. doc. 130, v. 15, p. ??; 163, pp ??; 185, pp. ??.

⁴⁹ Cf. doc. 148, v. 15, p. ?; 145, pp. ??, etc.

⁵⁰ The opposition of the parochial clergy at Aix, difficulties with the clergy of Marseilles, the Oblate crisis of 1823, the Icosia affair, etc.

means but he must take to achieve his salvation “while working for that of others”.

* * * *

“To assist at the blossoming of the supernatural life of souls, to contemplate the life-giving action of grace which manifests itself exteriorly by an admirable blossoming forth of flowers and fruits of virtues, is one of the most fortifying spectacles we can offer for meditation to our spirit”, writes Father Baffie⁵¹.

The foregoing reflections on Bl. Eugene de Mazenod’s understanding of sin and the quest for perfection already permit us to understand the richness of the pages which follow. May they offer a “fortifying spectacle” to those who find the time to read and meditate upon them.

Yvon Beaudoin, o.m.i.
February 17, 1991.

⁵¹ Baffie, *Esprit et vertus*, chap.1: *Application de Mgr de Mazenod à progresser dans la saintete*, p. 1



Eugene de Mazenod at 23 years of age. Portrait made in Paris in 1805 by the engraver G.-L. Chrétien.

1794 - 1807

1. Profession of faith¹.

[Venice, 1794-1797]

I firmly believe everything the Church commands me to believe, and I detest the jansenistic and other errors contained in this book. I am writing this so that it may be known that, although this book is in my possession, in no way do I adhere to any maxims contrary to the constant teaching of the holy, catholic, apostolic, Roman Church, which is one and indivisible, and will so be until the end of the world.

2. Extracts from notes "On the book entitled "Reason, Folly, to Everyman his Opinion," 1802².

Critical reflections, of a religious and moral nature, on a work in which Eugene finds abundant evidence of "the very close links between anti-religious bias and corruption of the heart" in philosophism.

"... Sacred chickens"

The second story is scarcely more interesting than the first. There is nothing amusing in it except the incident when the judges find themselves smothered in sacred feathers; and one has to laugh when one of the senators, wanting to intervene and bring the rumpus to an end, manages to get choked by one of the feathers that gets down his throat and so completes the defeat of his august body.

¹ Orig.: Rome, Oblate library, I, 3. Note on the inside page of the book: "Eraste ou l'ami de la jeunesse ..." New edition ... by l'abbé Fillassier. Paris, Vincent, 1776, 876 pp. Cf. also Arch. de la Postulation, DM II - 6a.

² Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DM II 5a. Two pages, written by Eugene in 1802, to convey (to his father) his impressions of the work of Pierre Edouard Lemontey (1763-1826), *Raison, folie, chacun son mot: petit cours de morale, mis à la portée des vieux enfants*. Paris, Year IX (1801), 282 pp.

According to the text itself, Eugene read this work as a distraction from other more serious studies. These notes were certainly written at Palermo, in the early months of 1802. In the period May-June, Eugene was at Colli at the home of the Cannizzaro family and subsequent to that the preparations for his return to France, the voyage, and the first months at Aix, must have been an obstacle to study.

We publish these extracts in which we can discern Eugene's interest in religious and moral issues; these are always the focus of his critical observations.

I am unable to see how he draws the conclusion from this story that there is more to be got out of changing one's gods than one's priests. It is not the only time he shows the latter his claws. But that is the vogue today. It provides an explanation for everything.

The third between Death A and B is a bitter piece of nonsense. It is true that in it he has found the way to show up a Jesuit to the least advantage. It was today's vogue at work again: it brooks no contradiction. It was a case of making fun of the dead, so as to satisfy one's rage against the living.

"What a day"

The fourth has its charm. The dialogues between Fabrice and the six ladies he meets in Paris are excellent, although they are not all equally apposite. The one on ambition is, in my opinion, pure padding. It is not the same way with this as it is with sensual pleasure which worms its way into a man's heart without him realizing it. Unlike sensual pleasure, ambition cannot be the punishment a person incurs who surrenders himself to the perils of a corrupt city. A person surrenders to sensual pleasure little by little almost without realizing it; one only becomes ambitious through reflection and with a definite intention to become so. Thus, while it is very natural to make the young man who surrenders himself without thinking into the hands of sensual pleasure pay a ransom, it is unjust to make him give up several years of his life to ambition when he did not want to hearken to her counsels.

Nor is it very natural either to bring in gout, which is usually thought of as the result of a soft or evil life, as a means of getting at the poor young fellow who had led a blameless life until the fatal day of his 20th birthday, which on account of his foolishness and prodigality, was to be the last of his life.

I will also censure the author for some reflections of an irreligious nature that flow like a fountain from a pen inspired throughout by his crazy philosophism to scatter broadcast blasphemies against religion, insults, offensive remarks, calumnies against catholic ministers and forms of worship.

These considerable defects apart, that are quite beyond redemption, it is a charming story.

Milord

"Milord Tow Pounder" is pleasant enough. The episode of the carriage with its pious lady passenger on whose skirt Mr. de Rutamcour

leaves the imprint of the distinctive marks of his sex, is in execrable taste and fit only for a guardroom jest.

I observe, a propos of this, that it is rarely one sees so clearly the very close links there are between anti-religious bias and corruption of the heart, and that the favourite weapon in philosophism to undermine and even destroy the faith is the propagation of licence and loose-living ...

Chapter Eight is a real trap. How can a man sink so low and take advantage of a poor reader's youth! What do I mean? After I have been busy all the morning in the laborious and often wearisome study of some diabolical subject, I take up my light reading for a moment's relaxation. And lo and behold I find I have tumbled into an endless, moral-economic dissertation, dry, abstract, sovereignly boring. Was there any warning that this was coming after "the Courtesan", "the Sacred Chickens," "What a Day", etc.? Can we then never be safe from shocks in this world below? Even so, if with an effort one could eventually come to understand what the author is trying to say, one could exercise patience. But how can one help thinking one is reading a fairytale when the author seriously asserts that a man, to whom he politely ascribes the title of "machine-worker", is deprived *ipso facto* of the faculty of intelligence, for the simple reason that over a long period of years he has been engaged in the same mechanical work, as if the work of his hands denied his mind of any kind of activity beyond the thing he applied himself to manually. He spins, he spools, therefore he does not think. What logic! I have only to consult the evidence of my own experience to refute this absurd piece of reasoning. In various countries I have visited a truly prodigious number of factories of every kind. What has been my experience? A worker so accustomed to the work that he has been doing over a period of several years that he leaves it almost entirely to his hands to get his work done, while his mind, totally occupied elsewhere, applies itself to banter, backbiting, and all kinds of other things with his workmates, just as much and even more so than a labourer does, since the latter, constantly isolated as he is, can pass whole days busy at ploughing a furrow in a straight line and saying never a word to a living soul.

How does the author go about persuading us that the worker more than the labourer is under the servile dependence of a master? Is it because he sees himself as receiving his pay as a favour? Show me the worker who does not see, in the payment he receives, the just recompense for his time and work. And what master would claim etc. Would he be afraid of being dismissed and that, while the peasant cultivating the land is assured that he will never lack for anything, he, quite ignorant as he is

of anything beyond the insignificant part that is all that has been entrusted to him up until this day, will see himself forced, if he leaves his first master, to die of hunger in abject poverty? This reasoning would have some semblance of solidity if there existed but one factory; but the worker who leaves one workshop will soon find the means of placing himself in another and will be employed at that only part that he knows etc.

It follows from what I have just said that everything that the author has to say on this matter is lacking in common sense.

The rest of the chapter I think is sound enough; but once more, all this fine and flowery language about the economy, repeated *ad nauseam*, gets us nowhere. Pass on your fine ideas to those in government; only they can carry them out, if they are reasonable; and leave people in peace who have no use for your reforms, which are usually nothing but wordy rhapsodies.

I was just congratulating myself on having finally got through the boring chapter on the economy, and I wanted to lay the book aside and seek relaxation elsewhere, when on turning over the page I saw in the title of the 8th story, chapter 9: "Truth, an Indian story". This linking of truth and story struck me as odd and I decided to gratify my fancy and read it. I found plenty of insight there, although the author had not drawn from the topic as much as he could have done. The story would not have suffered had he spared himself the invective against the veritable truth itself towards the end of his tale. That is when the reader really comes to understand the truth as known to the author is indeed a story.

There are, in "My Trimmings", some pretty things mingled with some boring dissertations. The arithmetic teacher's way of calling his wife his half-portion, when she had only one lover, his third, when she had two, his quarter when she had three, etc., etc., because of the portion left to himself, is quite amusing. France playing at dressing up during the Revolution; one group have grabbed places for themselves and do not want to go on playing; others who did not have the same push, condemned to remain on their feet where, if they get tired of this role, they are quite at liberty to sit down on their claws, - it is a charming pleasantry, that gives us a real idea of what went on in those unhappy times.

I will not set about refuting, in a short note like this, what the author proposes on the topic of man, the finest of the Creator's works. Suffice it to say that his extreme corruption and the contradictions that he finds within himself, will always present an insoluble problem to anyone who does not have resort to original sin, which, in bringing about our fall from

a state of perfection, threw us into such an abyss of evils that, while always desiring the good that was our portion, we are at the same time drawn to evil, which has become our punishment and from which we will be able to emerge only when we open the depths of our hearts to the Great Mediator who ransomed us and never ceases to offer us a helping hand.

3. To his father, in Palermo³.

He finds everything at Aix repellent. Loneliness.

Aix, March 9, 1804

... I am ashamed to have let such a long time go by without writing to the Princess of Vintimille⁴, but I am becoming lazy beyond words; I find everything repellent, except for writing you. I could stay at this forever, in my imagination present with you and my dear uncles. I often go on walks alone⁵ and pretend to myself, and could almost believe, I am chatting with you, as you are the ones I hold my conversations with. I am becoming misanthropic, and can say in all truth that nothing gives me any pleasure. I have a heavy case of aversion to this part of the world, but my reaction is quite the opposite of what I see in others; they are always complaining about a lack of manners, while they have no mind to be polite themselves; of a lack of friendliness, and of egoism, while they have no love for anyone except themselves; of gossip-mongering, while they have no idea how to pass their time except by having their noses in other people's business. In front of other people I simply say that it is the same everywhere, but what I am thinking and saying⁶ to myself is that I will

³ Orig.: Aix, bibliotheque Méjanes, papiers Boisgelin, B.69 In the part of this letter that is omitted, Eugene says he has received from his father the papers needed for his amnesty and that of his brothers but, like his mother, he does not dare to produce them to the authorities for fear of creditors; he goes on to speak of vague marriage prospects for Eugénie.

⁴ Eugene mixed with the Vintimille family while he was at Palermo. The Princess, née Leonora Moncada a Branciforti, was the Duchess of Cannizzaro's sister.

⁵ Mr. de Mazenod replied to these reflections on May 3: "... As for you dear friend, I want you to find some distraction, some amusement, to chase away your boredom and misanthropy, to stop taking your walks alone, as this but serves to feed your melancholy. Haven't you found some likable and decent companion whom you could take as a friend, an agreeable lady whose company would be a distraction? I do hope that you will not be sent this year to twiddle your thumbs at St.-L[aurant], or at least that you will not be kept there all alone ..."

⁶ Orig.: Aix, biblio. Méjanes, papiers Boisgelin, B.69.

On the first page of this letter Eugene reflects on his father's letter of February 23, which touched on the Cannizzaro family and what might have survived at Aix of the President's works and Fortuné de Mazenod's property.

never be able to get used to this place. Perhaps if you were here, I would manage it in the end ...

4. To his father in Palermo⁶.

Eugene's interest in the Church at Aix. Holy Thursday devotions.

Aix, March 29, 1804

... I have received the document I asked for from Fortuné; please give him my thanks. He was in my thoughts this morning at Mass when I saw the enormous Florens⁷ call out the oil of catechumens; this was in his capacity as head of the Chapter, *dignior*, that he was responsible for policing the rite. Father Martins⁸, former provost of Marseilles, was assisting the Archbishop⁹. We are going to set up a seminary; we have summoned Mr. Roux, a man of worth, from Avignon, to be its director¹⁰. I would not know if there are many postulants, although this is the only seminary serving ourselves and our suffragans. On Saturday we will ordain a priest and a deacon; some 45 or 50 have died during the year. I do not know if I told you that Father Tertian is on the list of the dead; the day before yesterday we buried an honorary canon called Lieutaud¹¹. After Easter I am going to the Carmelites¹² with news of Fortuné. I am sure of a good reception. *Salutem ex inimicis nostris*, etc., were Father Pin's words to me when I told him the news about his Society¹³ ...

I will be the only one writing to you today; at this very moment I am alone *in casa*, as my sister, who makes everyone jump, made them all go

⁷ Jean François Florens, canon and vicar general.

⁸ Jacques Martin-Compian, vicar general.

⁹ Jerome-Marie Champion de Cicé, Archbishop of Aix, Arles and Embrun from 1802-1810.

¹⁰ The major seminary was reestablished in 1804 and confided to the Sulpicians as before the Revolution, with Mr. Jean-Baptiste Roux as director.

¹¹ François Bremond Lieutaud.

¹² Fortuné had been their chaplain before the Revolution.

¹³ Canon Pierre Pin, former Jesuit. The Society, suppressed in 1773, remained in existence in Russia. Some Fathers had now obtained permission to establish themselves in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. The President passed on the news in his letter of February 23: "... Since you mention the Jesuits, I can tell you that their General, who has his residence at St. Petersburg, is at this moment in Naples, armed with the strongest of letters of recommendation from the Emperor of Russia and according to whose tenor four Jesuit houses will be set up in Naples and one in Palermo ... Whoever would have thought that it would be from far away Moscow that the Jesuits would make their come-back. God turns everything to his purpose, and the ways of his justice like those of his mercy are always impenetrable and marvelous."

out *subito dopo pranzo* (14) to go and visit some churches before the service. As for me, night-bird that I am, I will be quite happy to do them after *tenebrae*, and I have come and shut myself up to finish off the letter I began this morning before Mass. From my room I am following the noisy and glittering parade with you, for I remember how the whole of Palermo is out on the streets at this time; and when Palermo is on the move, it makes a bit more stir than we do. Ah well, it is just one of my little pleasures, to imagine that at the moment I am talking with you, I can be sure that you are doing such-and-such a thing; I carry the illusion to the point of believing I am by your side. Fortuné, I say to myself, is perhaps staying at home, let us go and keep him company. However, the moment has come to bring the illusion to an end; I have run out of space for writing, and with deep regret I put my pen away. So now I am going straight away to the Church to ask God in my prayers to reunite us soon. In expectation of that longed-for day, affectionate greetings to everybody.

5. To his father, in Palermo¹⁵.

Some news of the Carmelites, the Sisters of St. Thomas de Villeneuve and clergy dress. Boredom. Plans for the future.

Aix, April 12, 1804

... I have passed on to Mother Julien¹⁶ the part of your last-but-one letter that concerns her. She was delighted to be remembered by her dear father¹⁷ and charges me with passing her respects on to you all. The Sisters are 12 in number, soon to become 15. They are happier than words can say. They are perfectly at one and this makes them very happy. To conclude, they lack nothing. Mrs [de] Pinczon¹⁸ also has charged me to remember her to Fortuné; she has gained entrance to the hospital with

¹⁴ Immediately after dinner.

¹⁵ Orig.: Aix, bibl. Méjanes, papiers Boisgelin, B. 69. In the first three pages of this letter Eugene replies to that of his father dated March 15 in which the latter copied several letters from the Cannizzaros. Eugene's reflections on the Cannizzaros and on the tangled affairs of the de Mazenods in Provence.

¹⁶ Prioress of the carmelite community at Aix.

¹⁷ Fortuné de Mazenod.

¹⁸ Madame Pauline-Louise de Pinczon du Sel (1752-1820), foundress of the Hospital Sisters of St. Thomas of Villeneuve.

eleven of her Sisters, all in habit and following the rule of the Hospitallers that is theirs¹⁹; they are overloaded with work. Mr. Combe²⁰ too, parish priest of St. Esprit, charges me to convey to Father all the affectionate regard he still has for him. You see that I am loaded up like a donkey; so I lose no time in discharging my burden. Our priests are all in soutane, petit collet, cincture, sometimes in long cloaks, and usually wearing the clerical hat, which is very striking, percaire!²¹

I have begun a letter to the Princess of V[intimille] and intend to pre-date it by two months. I feel very guilty to have let such a long time go by without writing to her, but you cannot imagine my repugnance when I have to write to anybody besides yourself ... *Che sec [c]atura*²². In short, I am scandalously lazy. *Questo paese non me conviene*²³, and this is why I am have a repugnance for everything. Sometimes I am three weeks without going out; I only make exception in the case of La Poire²⁴. In general, there is one enormous defect prevalent here, people are distant and very egoistic. *Questo paese non me conviene*, I say it again, and quietly lay my plans to bring about a parting of the ways. Furthermore, it has to be said, this repugnance is also due to the fact that it is not in my character to spend my life planting cabbages. I have the feeling that I am not where I should be, and I get angry when I see the best years of my life draining away in idle obscurity. You can judge yourself if I should be bright and cheerful when you know that these thoughts go round and round in my head whenever I am alone. Goodbye, dear father. I feel a sadness coming on; my letter must be coming to an end; it is always sad to finish. Affectionate greetings to everyone.

6. To his father, in Palermo²⁵.

Eugene will get married only when he finds a "very rich and good-natured" bride.

¹⁹ She established herself at the hospital of Saint-Jacques in 1802: cf. Roux-Alpheran, *Les rues d'Aix*, 1848, II, p. 487.

²⁰ Mr. Antoine Combe (+1827).

²¹ A Languedoc expression of pity or endearment.

²² Italian: "what a bore".

²³ Italian: "this is no place for me."

²⁴ La Poire: surname of the Marquis Boniface de Périer, childhood friend of President de Mazenod.

²⁵ Orig.: Aix, bibl. Méjanès, papiers Boisgelins, B.69. Reply to his father's letters dated April 5 and 12. The first two pages were Eugene's reflections on Fortuné's illness and the financial affairs of the de Mazenods at Aix.

Aix, May 10, 1804

... I do not want to pass over the little tidbits of advice with which you wind up your letter of the 12th. I have to say that, notwithstanding all the respect I have for you, I could not help laughing. I have to keep repeating them over and over to myself and fix them firmly in my memory: "We urge you to go on fulfilling all your obligations, both towards the [State, and your parents], so that after becoming a good [citizen and a good son], you can one day," - I was expecting to read "earn eternal life", but not at all, it goes on - you can one day "become a good husband and a good father." Just like you, my dear father! But are you quite aware that to become a good husband and a good father one must first of all find a suitable wife? The truth is there is not in all Aix a young lady whom I find suitable, and perhaps I am not myself attractive to anyone. Consequently, I shall not get married, and consequently I shall not be a good husband and a good father. This does not mean I do not very much want to have children, but *la moglie*²⁶; ah! a *moglie* is a fearful thing! On top of that I want her to very rich, *ricchissima e buona*²⁷, and someone like that is really hard to find. And so dear father you see the chances are that it will be some time before your dreams come to fruition. Indeed, if they should blossom forth in money, amen to that; one can do what one likes with filthy lucre. I do not know if it is because I hear sermons everyday on how one must be detached from wealth in this world below, but one thing is clear - for some time I have noticed in myself an inordinate desire to have plenty of it. So much for the effect on me of the sermons of women²⁸. I would do such fine things with money; you my poor relations would never want for a thing! Ma perfida sorte, *tanto favore non me accordasti!*²⁹...

(26) Italian: "wife".

(27) Italian: "very rich and good-natured".

(28) His mother, aunt and grandmother. As to them President de Mazenod replied on June 14: "Your desire to be not so poor as in fact you are is very natural, especially in view of your former expectation of wealth. It has my approval all the more as I know that your every wish is governed by submission to the law, wisdom and moderation. It comes as no surprise to me that the sermons of certain lady doctors who preach to you incessantly on detachment from the goods of this world have so little effect; for they do not practise what they preach. One never cuts a very good figure when one is reduced to saying: do as I say, not as I do. But as I am in the same situation in many areas where my thinking has been better than my actions, I accept my neighbour's weaknesses, and in an effort to conciliate all views, my advice to you is: be satisfied with the little you have, but do not give up the quite justifiable ambition to obtain the increase you can aspire to on the basis both of your merit and of the trust and justice both of your fellow citizens and of your government. You seem to despair of finding the wife you want, while I keep alive the fond hope that one will turn up who, while bringing you ease and happiness, will be the consolation of my old age ..."

7. Extract from a “Miscellaneous” notebook³⁰.

Meaning of catholicity.

May 1804

One of the things that strikes me most in religion is “catholicity”, that communion that exists among children of one same Father who receives on high the intentions they form at the same time in lands so distant and who truly wills to give them in return a merit shared in common.

When I enter a church to place at the feet of the Eternal God my humble supplications, the idea that I am a member of that great family of which God himself is Head, the idea that I am so to speak in that situation the representative of my brothers, that I speak in their name and for them, seems to give my soul an instant expansion, an elevation that it is difficult to express. I feel that the mission I am fulfilling is worthy of my origins; I experience finally a very sweet satisfaction, a profound peace, that gives me the presentiment that my soul, an emanation from the divinity³¹, will only be perfectly happy when, freed from worldly hindrances, it can occupy itself solely in the contemplation of its Creator.

On reading the extract of a letter of Mr. de Chateaubriand, written from Rome, I noticed in it a fervent prayer that he addresses to God in a country chapel dedicated to the Madonna Quintilanea, where he came across a good christian prostrate before the altar. It is in the same vein as my own thought: “God of the traveller,” he says, “whose will it was that the pilgrim adore you in this humble sanctuary built in the ruins of the palace of some person great in the world, we are but two of the faithful here, prostrate before your solitary altar. Grant to this stranger, who seems

²⁹ Italian: “But, O perverse destiny, you have not accorded such favour to me!”

³⁰ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives. DM II 5a: Miscellanées, pp. 44-45. See also doc. 38. In 1802-1804 Eugene copied or analysed in this “Miscellaneous” notebook, the literary articles that J.-F. Geoffrey published weekly in the *Journal des Débats* (Rey I, p.68). At page 44 is found the text published here, entitled: “Le Sage dans la solitude” by Canon Pey, May 1804. The text is followed on page 45 with a citation of Chateaubriand. The first part of this text seems to be Eugene’s own work, it is loaded with ideas, in his usual style, and the confidence has a personal character.

Eugene wrote about the communion of saints on many occasions between 1804 and leaving the seminary, cf. E. Lamirande, *E. de Mazenod, catéchiste ... in Etudes Oblates*, 16 (1957), pp. 20-36, especially p.29. This present text, one may say, itself bears the hallmarks of that self-same grace and personal encounter with supernatural realities: a “sweet” satisfaction and “profound peace”.

³¹ One must understand the word “emanation” here in a broad sense. Eugene uses the same expression in a letter to his father dated September 15, 1806.

so profoundly humble before your Grandeur, all that he is asking of you; grant that this man's prayers may serve in their turn to heal my weaknesses, so that two christians who are strangers to one another, whose paths have crossed for but an instant during their lives, and who will go their separate ways never to see one another again here below, may stand astonished on meeting again at the foot of your throne that they are indebted to one another for a part of their happiness through the miracle of charity!"

8. Extract from "Remarques sur le Génie du Christianisme de Monsieur de Chateaubriand"³².

Why Eugene neglected to read it until 1805. Critical comments. The work's beauty.

Aix, January 1805.

If I have delayed for so long the task of reading a work which, it is said, created quite a stir before my return³³, I must lay the blame on my readiness to trust a man keen of wit but whom I should have held suspect on account of the erroneous opinions he professes³⁴. The *Génie du Christianisme* according to him was the work of a philistine, likely to ruin the soundest palate by the unremittingly pompous style of its author, a biased work that in no way deserved the praises lavished on it by the literati who pride themselves on their defence of religion. This young man

³² Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, DM II-5, 17 pages. We publish some extracts from these Notes in which we can recognize Eugene's good judgment and in particular be astonished at his interest in and knowledge of christianity, apologetics, etc. We know little of his activities at Aix. He had studied French literature with the Dutchess Cannizzaro in Sicily; at Aix he seems to deepen his religious knowledge. The text of a conversation that he sent to his father in June 1804 permits us to suppose that his studies were constant and methodical and that he was a member of a group that met for this purpose; but there is no mention of this in his letters. In his *Discours sur l'étude*, he writes for example: "It is not enough for fruitful study to allow oneself to be carried away by a foolish enthusiasm which, being but a feeling, cannot last long. One must study with method, moderate the first transport and, imitating the wise and provident farmer who deliberately restrains the coupled oxen over-eager at the plough, one must discipline one's mental powers, so they may progress at a measure pace. Assiduity and perseverance alone are of help in overcoming the many difficulties that study presents ..." We know that in 1803 he was studying Greek literature. He wrote to his father on March 6: "I grumble over my hefty Plutarch as I send him out for a walk occasionally along with his indecipherable translator."

³³ Viscount François-René de Chateaubriand (1768-1848) published "*Le Génie du Christianisme*" in 1802.

³⁴ Although lower down Eugene speaks of a "young man", he seems to be referring to the Jansenist François Joseph Roze-Johannis, Madame de Mazenod's relative and counsellor, born about 1752.

supported his judgment with a series of truly reprehensible passages. I believed without further inquiry that the work was typified by the sample that he showed me and I postponed a reading of it to a time when I would be less busy.

Some months later a worthy scholar³⁵, who is so kind from time to time as to keep in touch with my literary pursuits, asked if I had read the *Génie du Christianisme*. I answered out straight that I had not read it and did not expect to be doing so for sometime; I explained at the same time my reasons for neglecting to get to know this work. He answered simply that I ought to read it, and that I should tell him afterwards whether I persisted in this misunderstanding that he was quite right to describe as being at the least imprudent. He sent me the book and I read it attentively. Here now are my reflections. They will not be overlong as too many things escape one on the first reading of a book to excuse one from returning to it if one wishes to examine it thoroughly and in depth. This was not my intention, and so I contented myself with noting succinctly the impression it made on me and the opinion I have formed of it. I will add some remarks on the negative elements I noticed. I will offer few words of praise, as it would involve too much work to award praise to all that is deserving of it. I will bring out more of my criticisms as, these notes having no purpose other than to refine my taste, I must not neglect to identify and reject the faults of an author who deservedly enjoys a reputation and for that reason could become a bad example.

Mr. de Chateaubriand proposes to convert unbelievers by proving to them that the Christian religion is the most poetic, human, favourable to liberty, the arts and letters, of all the religions that have ever existed; he believes he must call on every imaginative art and everything that appeals to the heart in aid of this same religion against which these very things have once been used as weapons. He lays the basis of his work on these foundations, and his hope is to succeed. His intentions are doubtless very laudable, but I do not believe he can succeed with materials of this kind; he will perhaps get as far as arousing interest in a religion that is so attractive, but he must eventually establish her divine origin, that God wishes to be adored only in her bosom, and to the exclusion of every other, because she is the sole true religion, the only one emanating from him. When it is a matter of something so essential, one requires solid proofs, and not weak arguments relying on one's sense of fitness; it follows that you will be able to open the way to conviction, and that is already a lot, but you will never convince with the weapons you have chosen ...

³⁵ Eugene writes in the margin: Mr. De Noyé.

[p.8] Mr. Chateaubriand's idiosyncrasy lies in this: he wants us to accept a religion on the grounds that it is poetic. The religion of J.C. is attractive, but this is in no wise due to the fact that, out of the ideas it gives us, we can compose verse of superior interest to those of antiquity. The large number of persons who have absolutely no room for poetry would lack the capacity to appreciate this religion in all the advantages that it offers us; however, as it is indispensably necessary for everyone, everyone must be able to discover its powerful attraction which brings them to embrace this state which must lead them to eternal life, the sole end that religion offers us. Now, I say that the poetic element in religion, not being able to be really appreciated by any but a very small number of persons, is not a means which God would wish to use to lead us to him. Furthermore, even as to the people who can enjoy this advantage, if indeed it is one, it would offer them no proof in favour of the religion. I maintain therefore that it is ridiculous to compose whole books and rely so heavily on a proof that can so easily be contested, or which, even if not contested, is not of such a nature as to lead absolutely everyone to acceptance of the religion. In a word, what does it matter to someone who is seeking conviction about hard truth, and who therefore must accept only solid and incontestable proofs, what does it matter to him, I say, whether one can make fine verses as a result of knowing the Scriptures. I am the first to admit that the author's brilliant arguments, as proofs of what I oppose as errors, make not the slightest impression on me; even so I have a deep love of poetry, but I find that his pretended new proof adds nothing to my conviction, on the contrary I have the feeling that one could very much abuse the weird expressions used by Mr. de Chateaub[riand] for it would be possible to prove to him the superiority of polytheism in poetry and then, reversing the argument, cause considerable embarrassment to one who placed too much reliance on such a feeble proof. For the rest, none of the Fathers of the Church thought it appropriate for the defence of religion, none of the Apologists employed it, and this is for me a strong presumption for not taking it too seriously. Beauty and excellence in virtue, peace of heart, eternal happiness promised to those who faithful, these are the real attractions of the religion, these are the advantages that can be known, approved and felt by all without distinction. The gnawing worm of the conscience that torments the guilty, the troubling of his spirit, the disquietude of his soul, the pains with which he is threatened if he persists in crime, here we see the means employed by God to draw the sinner out of the quagmire in which he is immerse; from the moment he perceives that this unhappy state is a consequence of his infidelity, he will make the effort to extract himself from it, without any thought whether

the religion he wishes to adopt, because he feels he will be happy in it, may be poetic. I will say no more to prove how defective is that mode of conviction that the author congratulates himself on having discovered ...

(p.12) And so we arrive at the fourth part of the *Génie du Christianisme* that deals with worship. It is in my opinion the best part of the work ... One feels that the field was vast and that there were many fine things to be said on many subjects. The author has given expression to a large number of them. The book on missions is perhaps the most interesting of all in this section in that I failed to notice any blemishes mixed up with the beautiful things with which this work is so rich. My remarks on the book on the missions can be applied overall to this fourth part of the work. The author is here much wiser and more reserved. He might have insisted more on the services rendered to society by the monks, for history has more to tell us than he relates. He is very good on solemnities, but I am not afraid of being accused of over-severity for taking the author up on an expression which he carelessly comes out with. One cannot insist too much on precise terms when it is a question of a dogma that has to be clearly defined, which is why I would ask that Mr. de Chateaubriand not make use at all of the following word in his description of the procession which takes place throughout Christendom on Corpus Christi: "Lastly the celebration's Pontiff makes his appearance alone in the distance, in his trembling hands the *image* of the radiant Eucharist." If the author did not offer a better explanation on the following page when he announces that the "All Powerful has crossed the threshold of his temple," and when he asks where "this redoubtable God whose majesty the earthly powers thus proclaim" is going, one might ask him what he means by "the image of the Eucharist". For the rest it is only because of the extreme delicacy of the subject that one notices this small lapse in propriety. Even so, he gives a really good description and a just account of the imposing celebration of this day of joy for all Christians.

The following chapter, the Rogations, is a charming eclogue, fresh in sentiment and smiling images; the author is no less interesting in the lugubrious scenes, such for example [p.13] as the one he offers us in his chapter on funerals, but it is impossible not to notice the defect in the following sentence: "So when the urn of sorrows has been opened and has been filled with the tears of Kings and Queens, when great ashes and vast sorrows have engulfed their two-fold vanity in a narrow coffin." It is no more permissible to speak of great ashes than of vast unhappinesses, the former sins against the propriety of terms, the latter against the integrity of the idea; there is no longer anything of greatness in the tomb. The

corpse, and especially the ashes which represent to us a dissolution even more complete, the ashes, I say, of the most powerful of monarchs are no greater than those of the least of his subjects; one can apply the idea of greatness and majesty to the soul, even after its separation from the body, because it is immortal, but never to the material part which has been but the vile instrument handed over to the worms after it has served its turn. "Their two-fold vanity engulfed in a narrow coffin" presents us with a very defective antithesis which it is enough to draw attention to without further comment ...

[p.15] I think I have mentioned practically everything that has struck me on a first reading of the *Génie du Christianisme*. I have by no means mentioned all the good points, certainly I have not highlighted all the defects; one can indeed form an accurate idea of those the author is guilty of by an attentive reading of these notes, but I agree that it would be impossible to appreciate its merits simply on the basis of what I have said up to now. To convey therefore just idea of this work, I will conclude with an evaluation.

If Mr. de Chateaubriand undertook his work with the aim of convicting incredulity of error, he has not perhaps relied sufficiently on the clear and abundant proofs that we can advance against the enemies of religion; these proofs are known, and in every age have been used with success against the sophists; such weapons are not blunted with usage, on the contrary they acquire a new degree of weight under the different points of view that one envisages them.

But the author of the *Génie due Christianisme* did not intend, as he himself says, to follow the plan which had been set out for him by the ancient apologists, he is less concerned to convince the mind than to touch the heart, in which perhaps he is not in error, for I am convinced that a large number of readers, those who are unbelievers only for want of reflection, unaccustomed to the dryness of abstract proofs, would simply pass by did they but glimpse the least trace of didactic reasoning, whereas they will always read with pleasure anything that touches on their feelings. As to the sophists who are enemies of God and of his Christ by system, it would be useless to try to lead them to the truth they have betrayed, for they themselves know the futility of their sophisms; they know better than anyone that hundreds and hundreds of times they have been annihilated, yet in no way does this deter them from doling them out, like the demons who believe in God, but know him only to hate him. It follows then from what I have said that it would be useless for Mr. de Chateaubriand to compose a work with a view to convincing the sophists,

but it would not be an indifferent matter to present christianity in the most attractive light, to give a lead to the abused masses, and begin by bringing them to respect and love that religion that has been despised for want of being known.

He has in this sense succeeded. His work, written with fire, nourished by an ardent and ingenious imagination, puts things before us in a non-prejudicial light, and brings us on to see them in an attractive shape; his style has a certain brilliant quality that occasionally makes us pass over, almost without our noticing them, some highly reprehensible defects; they are many, these defects, as I have mentioned in my notes, but it would be easy for the author to eliminate them from his work ...

9. To his father, in Palermo³⁶.

Death of the countess of Vintimille. Religious ignorance and atheism of the present generation. Eugene will be prudent and avoid the traps laid for young people in Paris and keep a diary of his travels.

Aix, May 24, 1805

... The death of the poor countess of Vintimille³⁷ having given me the occasion to write to the prince, I thought you would know through him that I was still at Aix and keeping well. I cannot tell you how much I was moved by the unexpected death of this fine woman. I was looking forward to seeing a lot of her at Paris³⁸ and enjoying her charming conversation; but alas how often one is compelled to change one's plans in this world below. You already know perhaps the circumstances of her illness; it is also possible that you do not; so here now is the account that arrived from Paris. The countess, as you know, suffered occasionally from depression. Feeling a little worse one day than usual, she sent for a Sister of Charity, called the Grey Sisters, who are established at Paris and do such a good job in looking after the sick. The Sister felt it necessary to apply leeches, but she was alarmed at the general swelling of the body of the poor countess and alerted the people with her to send urgently for a doctor and even for a confessor, for she judged her patient to be in danger. It was high time, for a few days later she died, without any seeming worsening of her

³⁶ Orig.: Aix, bibl. Méjanès, papiers Boisgelins. B. 69. We omit pages 2 and 3 of this letter in which Eugene replies to those dated April 4 and 25 concerning the de Mazenods' town house and the Joannis' house at Aix.

³⁷ The princess' mother, cf. supra, note 4.

³⁸ Eugene was accompanying his aunt Alexandrine Joannis to Paris where the latter was going to look for a boarding establishment for her son Emile Dedons de Pierrefeu.

illness, and she would unquestionably have died unprepared, had not the Grey Sister raised the alarm. In addition, she was spared the horrors of death, and received the sacraments without being aware that she was in any danger. You would not believe the effect it has on me when people of that generation die, although it was already degenerating compared with that which preceded it. I am really afraid that tradition and virtuous example are going to vanish from the scene altogether. I shudder at the very idea that we will one day be reduced just to our own, perverse generation which has imbibed nothing but the poison of every vice and has no understanding of virtue, which stagnates in such a depth of ignorance that there is every reason to fear that we will fall again into a state of barbarism even more wicked than that which prevailed in the sixth century, since at least in those unhappy times people did believe in God, while today there is an open profession of an appalling atheism.

I have already been made aware of all the traps that are laid at Paris to ensnare a young man³⁹. I know there are a lot of contemptible individuals who pin their hopes of a loathsome wage on the information they glean by their wiles; but I know too how to hold my tongue; and the only evidence these gentlemen will get from me will be that my tongue is made for ice cream, for I don't believe they will catch me delaying any longer in a cafe than is needed to refresh myself with a delicious *sorbetto*.

If I had been luckier and my travel journal⁴⁰, which I can no longer find, had fallen into your hands, you would not have felt obliged to suggest I keep a record on my journeys of whatever would appear to merit remembering. And what use would travelling be, if one neglected to make thoughtful observations on the different objects of interest that so frequently present themselves. I cannot imagine what pleasure there can be in running around the world, bundled like a parcel from one carriage to another. If that is how one travels nowadays, it is not my way ...

³⁹ His father replied on July 11: "Since you know about the traps the tricksters there lay for young and inexperienced people, I am at peace. Besides, I have always held as high a regard for your prudence as for your wisdom.

⁴⁰ This refers no doubt to the notes of his travels in Italy, the original of which is today lost. The Founder completed them in the course of his lifetime and they were published in Missions O.M.I. in 1866. Mr. de Mazenod replied on July 11: "Why did you not tell me sooner that you forgot your account of your earlier travels? Perhaps I could have recovered it, but after three years there is nothing can be done ..."

10. To his father, in Palermo⁴¹.

State of educational establishments run by religious at Paris. Feast of the Assumption. Benefits of the 1802 concordat. Fortuné should come back to France and accept a bishopric.

Paris, this August 16, 1805⁴²

... I was doing it, but I had to break off to go to the bottom of faubourg St.-Germain to look for my cousin [Emile], who is in an excellent boarding establishment, governed and directed by several priests of the Congregation of St.-Sulpice, who give their pupils a formation that is first-rate in every respect. It took no little time to unearth this excellent college in Paris. This is not due to any shortage, for I know of a great number, but each worse than the last. Several have at their head priests who are married or living scandalously in concubinage. It follows that one can say of their establishments: *a fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos*⁴³. Over and above all the disorders flourishing there, the pupils are fed on principles so thoroughly bad that the other day a young man from one of these colleges blew his brains out, apparently because he was bored with life. Is not that deplorable? But what is even more so is that immorality, an inevitable consequence of this unhappy revolution which has destroyed so much, even the idea of a supreme judge, has made this frightful crime fashionable amongst the people, and that there are days when as many as three, four, five, even six suicides are committed in the city of Paris alone. Those who cannot afford to buy a weapon or gunpowder, simply throw themselves into the Seine ...

[August 14]

Tomorrow ... is the day of the Assumption, a big feast for many reasons. I will begin the day by going to the service at N[otre-] D[ame], where the Cardinal Archbishop will preside; after that there will be the horse races; finally the illuminations and fireworks, for as well as the feast that the whole Church solemnly celebrates, there is Napoleon's birthday. Thanks will be given to God too for the success of the concordat, and with good reason; any Catholic with an iota of Zeal for the good of religion

⁴¹ Orig.: Aix, bibl. Méjanes, papiers Boisgelin. B. 69. Reply to his father's letter of June 13. On pages 1, 2v, and 4, which we omit, Eugene speaks of the wedding plans for Eugénie, the debts due from Mr. D. Demandolx to the Mazenods, of Eugene's impotent desire to pay his father's debts, of the plan to go and see the Vintimille family at La Ferté.

⁴² Letter dated August 16, but begun 15 days earlier.

⁴³ Mt. 7,16.

should join his thanksgivings to those of the Church in France. Religion had been given up for dead in this kingdom; and if the peace accorded to the Church had not enabled its ministers to preserve the young, I mean the naissant generation, from the contagion which had affected all age-groups, but especially those we call the children of the revolution, all those of 18, 20 years of age would be ignorant of God's very existence. I was going to expatiate and tell you the loveliest things in the world, but the sun is at the antipodes and dusk has passed. Goodbye.

[August 16]

Yesterday I was at the Metropolitan Cathedral. I had there a small session of some four hours. His Grace the Cardinal Archbishop presided like a young prelate⁴⁴. Today I will go and pay him my compliments at dinner time; it is my day, and I am faithful to my habits. Ever since I came to Paris, I have not missed a Friday to go and eat his soup and fish. He speaks often of you and always of my great uncle. I will say nothing of the celebrations that took place yesterday ...

I leave them aside to reply, before my paper runs out, to a part of your letter that concerns Fortuné⁴⁵. There are two types of opinion: political on the one hand and religious on the other. Each person is free to think as he likes on the former; one may even hold one's silence, when one's thoughts differ from the ordinary, and that is what I do. But it is quite different with the second type. Once you are Catholic, you are no longer free to pick and choose. One must of necessity adopt the decisions of the one established to teach; and if there is schism, it is the party who is not with Peter who has gone astray. Such is my invariable manner of thought; I would not swerve from it, even were some decision handed down by this tribunal that goes against my own views. How much the more when I can tangibly see that everything that has been done was done for the best and has brought about the good. Believe me, someone who is far away does not see things as clearly as someone who is close up. The evil was so

⁴⁴ Born 1709, and so already an old man, Archbishop J.-B. de Belloy, Archbishop of Paris from 1802 to 1808, had been bishop of Marseilles from 1755 to 1791. Thus he knew the Mazenods well, especially Charles-Auguste-André, at that time vicar general of Marseilles.

⁴⁵ One of the reasons for making the trip to Paris was to meet some government Ministers for the purpose of obtaining pensions or positions for President de Mazenod and his brothers so as to hasten their return to France. The President had already however written on June 13 that, as a matter of principle, Fortuné would not accept any position in the Church of the concordat: "The benefices you wish to obtain for him would accord neither with his own principles or your own."

enormous, and the impending disasters were so hopeless, had the head of the Church not hastened to make big sacrifices. It is better to lose a leg than one's head or life itself, and I can assure you that there is an exact parallel between my comparison and the reality. That being the state of affair, it is mandatory for everyone and all the more for every ecclesiastic to cooperate with all one's strength to back up the plans of the Sovereign Pontiff. What was his goal? To preserve the faith in France. And how were his hopes to be achieved, if bishops and priests obstinately demanded what was impossible to obtain? This is not the place for me to say if the bishops who did not hand in their resignations acted for good or evil. But I will say, without fear of being contradicted, that if their colleagues had done the same, incredulity and frightful schism would have prevailed throughout France; the consequence of both the one and the other would have been a general abandonment of all principle, for the wolf does not take the same care of his flock as the shepherd, and besides we know what schismatics teach and how even that small amount of moral instruction they might have given to the people would have gone unheeded. And so it follows from everything I have just said that in ten years' time one would not have found in France even the bare notion of a religion. I will not press further along this path, which is unanswerable, and I will go on to say that I was right to suggest to Fortuné a place in the Church and an eminent place at that; and this for a quite simple reason, namely, that the higher one is in dignity and power, the better placed one is to do good, and that, recognizing in my uncle (along with all who know him) great virtues and qualities especially precious for the present times, I simply had to place before him, man of zeal that he is, the means of doing a lot of good. I know that they are looking for good men to fill the bishoprics of the kingdom. I know that the government wants to appoint none but workhorses, to coin a phrase, as it is serious in its intention of eradicating root and branch all the schisms and heresies spawned since the Revolution or which have increased ... Is that the difficulty that puts my uncle off?⁴⁶ My goodness, when one wears the livery of Jesus Christ, ought one to fear anything, and should one not place one's hope in him who strengthens us? Let us thoroughly go over the duties that our character as Christian and priest impose on us. After that, let us consult our conscience to find out whether it reproaches us for our excessive modesty, which degenerates into pusillanimity. Is it the fear of aspiring to an

⁴⁶ At the end of the President's letter of March 21, 1805, Fortuné had written that he would not accept episcopal consecration: "The more I think about it, the more I fear the duties and responsibility it imposes."

employment that he believes to be beyond his strength? And, heavens above, it is now two years that he has dug in his heels and is refusing an offer, which has been refused to many who ardently desire it.

Well that is enough for today. I must be really worked up, to have spoken with such force in all the hubbub made by four persons who are in the room where I am writing. For the rest, if we were in the position I would like, I would have enough influence to get Fortuné a diocese in the mould of the one given to the former bishop of Vence⁴⁷, I mean a diocese where there has not been a lot of trouble on account of schisms ...

11. To his father, in Palermo⁴⁸.

Eugene will leave Paris with his aunt. He is misunderstood. He is a good and affectionate son, genuinely so and not for ulterior motives.

Paris, September 3, [1805], completed September 4.

... It is high time I think to answer your letter date July 11, which I received the day after posting the last letter I wrote you. The first thing for me to do is to undeceive you and give you assurance as to the fear my mother raised that I no longer intend to return home⁴⁹. I cannot do it more effectively, I think, than by telling you that our departure is more or less settled for next week, not that I had not wanted to stay at Paris until the end of September, but it is not worth the effort even to mention my wish for the sake of such a short period of time. Is it possible that no one in the world understands me?⁵⁰ Is it conceivable that my mother does not know how to appreciate me? Yes, I have the impudence to say it or rather I am

⁴⁷ Charles F.J. Pisani de La Gaude, born at Aix-en-Provence in 1743, Bishop of Namur from 1804 to 1826.

⁴⁸ Orig.: Aix, bibl. Méjanes, papiers Boisselin. B. 69. Reply to the letter of July 11. We omit the beginning and end of this letter in which Eugene declares that he has come back from La Ferté where he visited the Talleyrand family; he also spoke of the difficulty of finding a husband for his sister.

⁴⁹ Mrs. de Mazenod had written to Mr. de Mazenod on June 132. She was afraid that Eugene did not want to come back from Paris as soon as his aunt whom he was accompanying; she asked her husband to intervene. The President wrote on July 11: "So I beg you, in the name of all your tenderness for me, not to persist in such a plan, supposing you ever had such an intention ..."

⁵⁰ The President replied to this question on October 31: "I think I was a little too hasty to praise what you say, for I come up against one expression which is neither praiseworthy nor just, and would most likely make me really angry, if I made no allowance for what you say later on. Is it possible, you say, that no one in the whole world understands me? When someone says 'no one' he makes no exceptions and I think that your father and uncles do deserve to be excepted from this general proposition, for they understand you perfectly ...

forced to. In truth she makes me lose patience when I hear her cry wolf! She really ought (and it could end up with making me become bad enough to wish it on her) she really ought, I say, to have a son like many I see; then she would have something to complain about. And should I really have to sing my own praises here, or rather make my own defence? It is a sad day if my family does not share the opinion that others have of me and that I do deserve, in all truth, if the fulfillment of every duty, the setting aside of all distractions, and finally moderation on every occasion can be a title to obtain it. What more is expected of me? Really, I cannot imagine. My mother might thank God that the principles I act on are too solidly based for me ever to be able to throw them overboard, for she can be sure that if my good conduct was only a pretence there would have been no resisting the pleasure of letting her find out for herself the difference between a son such as I am and a son such as the one she would have forced me to be. But she can rest easy on this point. I cannot doubt that my mother loves me very much, and in that she does but fulfil the duty laid on her by nature and at the same time by gratitude since a son could not have more tender sentiments towards his mother than those I have towards mine; this perhaps is what is questioned, because this love is not exclusive of every other (let me explain: it is not claimed that I must love only my mother, but because I do love others as well as my mother, it is imagined, in the family I mean, that I love her the less for it, and one member of the family dares to make of it a matter of reproach. In justice to my mother I must say that she has never given me grounds for thinking that she harbours such thoughts.) It is nonetheless true that it gives me no satisfaction, that far from pandering to my self love, I am made to feel every so often that I shall have a say in things only after the death of her who gives the orders (at this price I would like to take a back seat all my life) and clearly it is not very pleasant for me to hear my mother say: "you may do as you like once I am dead."

You love your father and mother with all your heart, you in your turn are loved by them, but as each one's feelings are influenced by his character, my love is more demonstrative and more confiding, your mother's is more reserved and cautious. Each is equally lively, equally tender. I know that, although she is quite convinced of all your merit and all your virtues, she does not approve however of my extolling them, as she is afraid that it will spoil you. The truth is, as you yourself put it so well, she does not know how to move from the general hypothesis to the particular case, as she makes no allowances for differences in people and she has no inkling that what would spoil a child who was quite different from you serves in your case only to encourage and inspire you to fresh desires to do good. She has heard the general proposition: 'Children must always be kept under control.' And making (if you will excuse the expression) of this principle a saddle for every horse, she maps out a course of action which would not have been without its dangers in the case of a son less enlightened, less wise and less prudent than yourself ..."

I know my family too well to be mistaken in all this, while being conscious especially of the spirit of friendship that surrounds me. Mother certainly means well, but she is wrong to try to apply a general rule to a particular case that merits exception. She wants to make me feel that I am dependent on her, so as to secure my good behaviour. You know me fairly well, do you think that this precaution is necessary, do you think that it would even be prudent to rely so much on such means? Really, if my heart was not in the right place, and I was not constantly concerned about the pleasing or painful impact of my decisions on my family, of the way I could go, it must be clear that I could make very short shrift of claiming my independence. Dear God! I repeat, I am little understood. They are relying on weapons that I could easily defy while the assurance they want is safe in my own heart.

For the rest you must not imagine that I am unhappy. That could not be, as in the middle of it all I detect my mother's real feeling which is one of tender love for me, although it may be spoiled by weakness, and as my grandmother loves me as her son and besides takes on herself little attentions which it is not in the character of her daughter to do for her children, although, I repeat, she loves them as much as it is possible to love them, and finally as I am assured of your love and that of your brothers whom I love as I do yourself, that is to say with all the capacity of my heart, soul, and all my faculties. The only thing lacking to my happiness is to be reunited with you.

I have the feeling that I have dwelt a little too much on this last point; it has used up the space for a few more things that I wanted to tell you, but I am not sorry to have taken the opportunity to explode, it calms me down; I beg you to keep it to yourself as my feelings could be misunderstood, and I have not perhaps gone into them enough in the heat of first reactions ...

12. Eugene to his father, in Palermo⁵¹.

Fortuné ought to write to the superioress of the Carmelites. Items of religious news from Aix.

⁵¹) Orig.: Aix, bibl. Méjanès, papiers Boisgelins, B.69. Reply to the letter of October 3. In the first three pages that we omit, Eugene says that he cannot go and see his relatives at Palermo, for want of a passport, but he speaks of the itinerary he would have followed through Italy; he explains the behaviour of his mother towards the de Mazenods and suggests his father should write a book on Marie-Caroline, queen of Naples and benefactress of the de Mazenods.

Aix, November 1, 1805

... Why does not my uncle write to Mother Saint-Hylarion? I do not commend his silence, *in hoc non laudo*⁵². These good and holy daughters of Saint Therese have purchased the what remained of the Oratory where they now number 17. Eight more are asking to enter; the superioress would not ask for better, but she has no more room as I understand it. Every time I go to see her she speaks of her dear father and, let it be said between ourselves, her dear father little deserves to be so well remembered, for he seems to me to have completely forgotten her; this does not prevent her praying to the Lord each day for him.

A fairly large number of Ursulines have come together too, they have resumed their former work as school-mistresses, but to the shame of the people of Aix, I believe that they are all foreigners. My aunt⁵³ heads up this community. I have rarely seen women of such great virtue and modesty. Have I told you that good Father Miollis has been named Bishop of Digne, he should be consecrated about this very time⁵⁴. I am delighted to have at Saint-Laurent a pastor such as he, he is a real apostle. Old Father de Callian⁵⁵ is back from Paris, he has a lot to say about everything. Our seminary is surviving, there are at present some fifty fine entrants. How are the Jesuits, let me have some news, I am their great admirer and still more ardent defender ...

13. To Emmanuel Gaultier de Claubry⁵⁶.

Encouragement to remain strong in witnessing to his faith, despite the sarcasm of the officers in the regiment.

Aix, November 1805

... Your letter of October 13, my dear and good friend, filled my heart with bitterness. I had a lively sense of all the snubs you endured during that wretched meal and I would like to tell you that the matter will end

⁵² 1 Cor. 2, 22

⁵³ Sister Marie Victor, née Amyot, distant aunt of Eugene on his mother's side.

⁵⁴ Bishop Bienvenu de Miollis, Bishop of Digne from 1805 to 1838, whom Father de Mazenod will often be meeting after the Congregation's foundation.

⁵⁵ A member of a noble family of Provence, the Mourgues de Calliam, related to the Mazenods.

⁵⁶ Copy in Rey, *Mgr de Mazenod*, I, 70. In the compartment of the carriage which was bringing him towards Lyon, at the end of September, 1805, Eugene found himself opposite this young military surgeon who was rejoining his regiment in Italy. Their friendship lasted until Emmanuel's death in 1855, cf. Rey, *Ibid.*, I, 68-69.

there, but these first trials that every newcomer whoever he may be is made to undergo, will be followed by others to which those who do not profess faith in Jesus Christ would not be submitted. It is when they have found out that you are a Christian that they will shower you with sarcasms, insults and scorn, it is then that the children of darkness will bend all their efforts to pervert the child of light and it is then too, my dear friend, that you will need to call upon all the strength you received with the seal of regeneration and through the imposition of hands. But as anything that I might say to reaffirm your faith and awaken your hope will have little effect as coming from my mouth, I have gathered together below some words of consolation that I have been careful to draw from the pure wellspring, in the book of life, that admirable code where all needs are foreseen, and remedies laid by. So it is by no means Eugene, it is Jesus Christ, it is Peter, Paul, John, etc., who send you this wholesome food which when received with that spirit of faith of which you are capable will certainly not be without effect⁵⁷.

14. To his father, in Palermo⁵⁸.

Qualities and virtues of his mother and of his uncle Roze-Joannis.

Aix, December 26, 1805

... What you say in reply to the emotional and ill-considered letter I wrote you from Paris with regard to some trivial reproaches expressed by my mother, fills me with shame and confusion⁵⁹. I search within myself for some explanation of what I was drawn to say in a fit of ill-humour but it quite escapes me, and this does not surprise me as my heart was not at all in these ill-founded and much exaggerated complaints. How could I for a single instant have failed to recognize the love which that excellent mother has for me? In truth I am tempted to believe that some wicked spirit got hold of my pen. My mother is an adorable being, possessed of every virtue, there is not a single fault one can impute to her except for an extreme frankness which, at times when she is caught up in some idea that

⁵⁷ Rey only copied this extract and left out the 3 pages of Holy Scripture transcribed by Eugene. He adds, however: "We do not know of a more complete and striking collection of texts adapted to fortify Christian courage."

⁵⁸ Orig.: Aix, bibl. Méjanes, papiers Boisgelin. B. 69. We are omitting pages 1, 3 and 4 of this letter in which Eugene speaks of Orleans which he visited in the course of his trip to Paris; he promises to send money to his father if Queen Marie-Caroline stops her grant to the Mazenods and he makes some remarks on his father's letters of October 31 and November 28.

⁵⁹ Cf. Letter n.11, note 50.

takes hold of her imagination, prevents her from measuring her language and she very often says more than she intended. She has a heart of gold and adores her children, mother, husband, and the whole family, she is forgetful of none save herself whose needs unfortunately she does not pay enough attention to. My mother is in a word the most perfect woman I know. Do not put this picture I have just drawn down to filial affection. You might fear that without my being aware of it I have allowed myself to err in partiality which, after all, would be rather excusable but you will better appreciate my testimony when you realize that it is in line with the opinion of everyone who really knows my mother⁶⁰.

Her reserve towards me over quite a lengthy period, with regard to business matters, has a very natural explanation. She was used to seeing round about her many very disturbed young people, she had personal knowledge of some who have even employed cunning to deceive her relatives, she did not yet know me and she was being careful; she needed more time than you did to build up trust in me, but eventually she does pay me in particular this due, a thing that she never denied me in public, but which she had not thought prudent until now to give me fully. This way of treating me is readily understood and there is nothing wrong with it.

You will at the same time understand how she came to place her trust in her cousin, when you know that he is the only man who possesses mine, and without a doubt he deserves it, and I had to have strong proofs of his attachment to me for me to accord him my friendship notwithstanding the gulf dividing our religious views, for you know that my dear uncle is, worse luck for him, the most obstinate jansenist in christendom. I only hope that the austere life he leads and his generosity to all kinds of poor people will merit him the grace of entering the sheepfold which he and his confreres claim they have never left. And really it is a great pity that he clings to that error for apart from this he is the most perfect and enlightened christian I know⁶¹. I will refrain from listing all we owe him, as there are still a lot of other things I have to tell you ...

⁶⁰ The President replied June 24, 1806: "I have just read a passage that brought me tears of joy, the part where you describe for me with so much sincerity and passion your feelings towards your mother. I know too, and you have given me ample proof of it, the full extent of those which move you in my regard, so that if you have to thank the Lord for having given you a tender father and a good mother, we for our part owe him no less thanks for having given us the best of sons; your filial piety will not fail to bring you heaven's blessings, and your happiness and your virtues both will always be what most alleviate my sufferings or, to speak with more justice, will make them vanish entirely."

⁶¹ With regard to Roze-Joannis, Mr. de Mazenod replied on June 24, 1806: "I would be only too happy to be able to share your opinion of your uncle the jansenist, I like to think

15. Profession of faith⁶².

Gravity of Jansenist errors.

[Aix,] 1806

This is a precious book. By itself it suffices to reveal the character of the dangerous sects that have thrown France into a turmoil for more than a century and a half, and which were in the end one of the main causes and powerful instrument of the late revolution, which did more damage even to the Church than to the State.

Every fact is twisted and falsified. The most wholesome truths are destroyed. Error is advocated with an audacity and effrontery equalled only by the heretics who came before them and on whom they have battered.

The enormity of the principles contained in this book (which is the resumé of a work of Father Racine, larger and just as unorthodox), the enormity I say and the dreadful conclusions that one is compelled to deduce from them, means that they do not constitute a real threat to anyone who has received a little instruction. I think, at the same time, that it can serve a useful purpose in so far as the author, (contrary to the normal usage of the jansenist sect), exposes the horrid principles that the sect professes, while normally it conceals them beneath a catholic exterior or at least it seems such to the eyes of people who have had but little instruction and judge by appearances.

The Church fallen into error and teaching it as a principle of faith is one of the *trifles* to be found in this book of TRUTH. For who shall we label as Church if not the Sovereign Pontiff in communion with the IMMENSISIME majority of the catholic bishops, or to be precise all the bishops in the world with the exception of four.

For both the Pope and all the other pastors-in-chief by their adhesion to the pontifical sentence, have condemned the errors of Baius, Jansen,

that he is at present what you say he is, indeed I do not doubt it in the light of what you say. But there was a time when he made himself very difficult towards me and did me some ill turns, I forgive him for it now wholeheartedly both because it is God's command and for the sake of the attachment you say he has towards you."

⁶² A page written in Eugene's hand and glued at the front of the volume entitled: *Oeuvres posthumes de M. l'abbé Racine*. Avignon, 1759, 330 pp. Orig.: Rome, salle des reliques, n.52. This work of Father Bonaventure Racine (1708-1755) was edited by Dom Clemencet, mauriste and jansenist sympathizer (+1778).

and Quesnel, which the author holds for TRUTHS. So the Church has gone astray. So J[esus] C[hrist] has failed to keep the promise he made us to be with her until the consummation of the world, unless one chooses to believe that the Church subsists in the four refractory bishops and the small number of their followers. *How absurd!* I say no more.

In witness of my faith.

Eugene de Mazenod.

16. Jansenism⁶³.

History of Jansenism, condemnation by the Church. Why Eugene studies this teaching.

Aix, 1806

[p.1] Until such time as I prove more fully that the new sectarians called jansenists bear about them the marks that have always characterized the heretics of every age, that in part they rest their case on the same reasons, pride themselves on the same external show of virtue, rigorism, perfection, press their audacity so far as to hold themselves out as the only defenders of the truth which is no longer, they would say, the necessary prerogative of the Church, understood in a Catholic sense, namely, the union of the Pope with the majority of the pastors-in-chief, finally, that they maintain their disobedience to his decrees with as much and more obstinacy, subtlety, affrontery and hypocrisy, and deny it with no less violence⁶⁴, I will examine this sect under one special aspect, one which has not been sufficiently highlighted although in this it bears a perfect resemblance to every other sect, namely, in its novelty and the fewness of its followers⁶⁵.

⁶³ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, DM II-6a. In a notebook for 11 pages, Eugene makes a resume of the history of Jansenism and its condemnation by the Church; he refutes the theory according to which infallibility resides only in the decisions of Councils. We publish some of the more personal passages only where he affirms that he has drawn "from the Councils and the writings of the Holy Fathers pure Catholic doctrine". He seems to write as if trying to convince a listener, however he says that these notes will probably be of service only to himself.

In the course of this script Eugene refers several times to the *Abrégé chronologique des principaux evenements qui ont précédé et suivi la Constitution Unigenitus* (Chronological Abridgment of the principal events before and after the Constitution Unigenitus), by Father Nicolas Le Gros, Utrecht, 1730, cf. J. Leflon, *Mgr. de Mazenod*, I, 269.

⁶⁴ Eugene adds the note: Cf. Bossuet, Letter to the Religious of Port-Royal.

⁶⁵ Eugene adds the note: No-one can doubt, says Vincent de Lerins, but that antiquity is to be preferred to novelty, and universality to private opinions (Comm. I, p. 369, etc.)

And in this regard I shall be treading in the footsteps of the Church which has always employed these weapons to impose silence on her rebellious children ...

[p.6] Let no-one imagine that I am exaggerating their crimes. Alas! their teaching is already monstrous enough in itself without adding to its enormity. I lay out the facts, facts confirmed and affirmed by the entire group. Anyway, what motive would I have for denigrating those people? Truth is the sole end of all my researches and this truth is found only in the Catholic Church. Complete impartiality has always guided my pen. Aloof from all partisanship, my eyes are under no spell. A simple layman, I apply myself it is true to my religion as I consider this study to be the first and most essential of my duties, but who will accuse me of belonging closely or loosely to any corps, any Society which is contrary to them? Coming into the world twenty years after the destruction of the Jesuits, those religious whom they have always regarded as their most redoubtable adversaries, against whom they directed all the glows that they did not direct against the Church, I have known them so to speak only by their works which I read, as well as those of the Jansenists, without being able to find in the former that moral laxity, those erroneous dogmas that are attributed to them; I speak of books that are in the hands [p.7] of everyone and not at all of some old theological works in which one finds insinuated some opinions which, even making allowances for the times when these works were written, are not for that reason any less reprehensible, but which would be as unknown as other sustained with much passion by a very great number of theologians of every Order, and even by entire Universities not excepting the Sorbonne, if the Jansenists and the other enemies of the Jesuits had not taken the trouble to translate them with an altogether special attention at the risk of teaching many people what they ought never to have known and was clearly never written for them.

But before immersing myself in these readings, often tedious as they are, but at times useful, I wanted to put myself in a state to judge them, and so I drew from the Councils and the writings of the holy Fathers the pure Catholic doctrine, and it is in its light that I have judged them and saw myself forced to condemn the Jansenists and Quesnellist opinions, accordingly I cannot be accused, in any way, either of prejudice or of animosity. Nothing but the search for truth and the desire to satisfy myself about my faith and the judgments I make based on that unchangeable catholic, apostolic and Roman faith, could have brought me to put these things in writing, things which in all probability will serve no-one but myself.

I must add that, attached as I am by bonds of blood and friendship to one of the most enlightened of Jansenists and one who is at the same time one of the most obstinate of them⁶⁶, I often engage in conversation with him about these matters, and it can well be imagined that he spares no pains in presenting his sect's doctrine to me in the best light possible in an effort to get me to join, knowing how inflexible my character is in the matter of duty as to which I do not tolerate any kind of tampering⁶⁷. So I am in a better position than anyone to know if anyone is attributing to them opinions they do not hold; for I can guarantee that their doctrine is the same as that we read in their books with the difference that in talking with them you force them to admit certain consequences that they take great pains to conceal in most of their works, but which are not difficult to deduce from their principles which are set out in all the publications with which they have inundated the public ...

[p.9] "Much more again would emerge if, penetrating deeper into their system, I set out for you their errors concerning the sacrament of penance, the eucharist and orders, on the Church's discipline, etc. Does one need more to demonstrate the incredible outrages of the Jansenists? Will you ever again let yourself be taken in by the fine words that are ever on their lips? My patience is at an end and I cannot continue my exposition of their blasphemies ..."

17. To his father, in Palermo⁶⁸.

Mr. de Mazenod and his brothers should come back to France.

[Aix] July 4, 1806⁶⁹

My dear, good friend, let's try this way again of sending you my news; I suspect a number of my letters are still on the way — is it possible you have not received a single one?

I have not received any of yours since the one you wrote dated May 2, and my impatience is matched only by the worry I cannot help feeling,

⁶⁶ Roze-Joannis.

⁶⁷ Eugene adds the note: He told me once that I was made to be one of them and that with my firm and decisive character, and with principles as severe as mine, he could not understand how I was not one of the most zealous of Jansenists.

⁶⁸ Orig.: Aix, bibl. Méjanes, papiers Boisgelin. B. 69. On the second page of this letter Eugene speaks about Queen Marie Caroline, and Fortuné's property in Provence.

⁶⁹ Eugene writes the date in Italian: "Luglio".

however hard I try to find reasons for not worrying⁷⁰. I cannot hide the fact that I do not have the courage to face the challenge of this new trial and that the courage and resignation with which up to now I have withstood blows of every description are failing me on this occasion. Separated from people who form part of me, the happiness of keeping in touch by means of a correspondence that is very dear to me has helped me wait in patience for the happy moment of our reunion for which I am continually longing. My dear friends, life is not meant to be like this, watching our days flit by, separated from one another by three hundred leagues. Just think for a moment, can we really bring ourselves to make the cold-blooded decision that we will not see each other ever again before the day of Resurrection? We are doing our best to undermine the order established by the Author of nature who, when he made us out of the same flesh and blood, could not have intended us to live out our lives in stubborn separation. I can well imagine that the ties of an honourable attachment as well as gratitude make the thought of the moment when you will have to leave a country and people whom you have so many reasons to love, painful to contemplate. I applaud these feelings, indeed I share them, but when all is said and done does one have to sacrifice in the name of these duties, that I value just as much as you do, other duties no less essential? or to express it better, could one not, while fulfilling the latter, go on treasuring, deep down in one's soul, love and eternal gratitude towards all those who have acquired rights over your chivalrous hearts? Personally I intend to keep on hammering away with this argument. So long as I had hopes of going to join you, I could argue without insisting, but now that all my plans have gone down the drain, I will keep on at you, until you give way to my arguments; I have gone over all the objections you could raise; the old ones and yet fresh ones, and I can refute them every one. In short, there is only thing for it: surrender to the desires and into the bosom of a family which opens wide its arms to you ...

⁷⁰ Napoleon's wars and England's mastery of the seas made communication with Sicily difficult. Father and son continued to write regularly, by over-land post, but we have only 4 of Eugene's letters and 6 of Mr. de Mazenod's for 1806, letters which are not so long as usual and in which Eugene never stops urging the Mazenods to return to France, especially after Queen Marie Caroline made cutbacks in the help she was giving.

18. To his father, in Palermo⁷¹.

Mr. de Mazenod's absence set Eugene's destiny on a course quite contrary to his original dreams.

[Aix,] September 15, 1806

... My dear friend, if my mind were not so pre-occupied with the loss we have suffered⁷², I would come back again on what I said in my letter of July 4 which you believe you have successfully refuted, but I would need to be more at peace within myself than I actually am. I will just ask you to take note of the fact that your intention seemed to be to make me understand that you are never going to be reunited with your family since you seem to make it a condition that it compensate you for the sacrifice of the three thousand francs per annum that you would be obliged to abandon. Now, as neither your son nor anybody else in your family will be able, however well-intentioned they may be, to benefit you in this way, therefore you must stay where you are. This is an argument that my tender feelings would not allow to go unchallenged, but I will let it pass for now ...⁷³

As to myself, it is more than likely that my father's absence has set my destiny on a course quite contrary to what the feelings of my heart, in the past so eager for glory, seemed to hold out for me. I will perhaps be all the happier for it if I am able to turn my scarcely voluntary inactivity to my heavenly profit, an inactivity that I would never have shrugged off without the advice and counsel of a father enlightened as mine ...

⁷¹ Orig.: Aix, bibl. Méjanes, papiers Boisgelin. B.69.

⁷² On the first page of this letter Eugene expresses his grief of the death of the Princess of Vintimille.

⁷³ Mr. de Mazenod had replied on the first of August: "The desires you express for our reunion are like our own, you have a marvellous grasp of that, and when you see me putting off an arrangement that I so much desire, you must believe that it is not without the strongest reasons. We can undertake it only after a most serious heart-searching, for if it should turn out badly, there would be no going back. You tell me that you have weighed the pros and cons, but have you really considered that it entails for us giving up an income of more than three thousand pounds to find ourselves with nothing and at everyone's mercy? Is it physically impossible for you to replace what we would lose, and I cannot face in cold blood the extreme hardship to which you would be reduced to take care of us. Dear child, let neither of us be deluded with illusions springing from our love and be patient a little longer as we wait the arrival of the moment so desired by us all. For the rest your microscope magnifies things out of all proportion ..." Mr. de Mazenod returned to the same theme in the letter dated November 4-11: "Would not your mother have every reason to say: This is a fine state of affairs: they supported themselves when they were away at not cost to us, and they come to rejoin us to live off us and reduce us to a state of misery. I really do not know how I would reply to that argument, and then how to endure the daily assaults of a host of creditors wanting to be paid and being unable to ..."

19. Short reflections on a discourse by Mr. Blanche, Vicar General of Aix⁷⁴.

Harsh judgment passed on Vicar General's sermon, in which instead of preaching Christ Crucified he proposed for the meditation of the faithful the re-establishment of the monarchy and applauded French military power.

Aix, December 2, 1806

It is perhaps an event unparalleled since the establishment of christianity for a Catholic priest, a minister of the God of peace, charged by his vocation to instruct and edify, in short to preaching nothing but Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ crucified; it is I say an unparalleled event that a man charged with so elevated a mission should open his mouth in the assembly of the faithful, in full view of the altars, the seat of Truth, and propose for the meditation of the faithful the re-establishment of the monarchy and the victories of the French military, and nothing else ...

No one will deny that the speaker would have been worthy of praise if it had been in an academy that he had manifested the praiseworthy sentiments of a good Frenchman rejoicing over the success of the military forces of his country. But in the temple of our God who is also the God of the Italians, the Austrians, and the Prussians, who are all our brothers, whom we are severely enjoined to love as being all children of the same Father, before whom as the Apostle says there is no acceptance of persons or of nations once they profess the same belief; I have my doubts, I say, that it is in conformity with the excellence of the precept of Christian charity to congregate in this temple to rejoice over their disasters. For do not let us deceive ourselves: it is one thing to thank God for the victories he has been pleased to accord to our armies, as is the duty of a grateful Christian, it is another thing to gloat over the gory details of our various successes, to make as it were an exact count of the mortal blows we inflicted on our brothers, taking a lingering pleasure in the shedding of buckets of blood. It is difficult not to nourish some feeling of vengeance, when as we remember our achievement we make no effort to forget what those we have defeated would have wished to make us suffer. My question then is, is it not against the spirit of christianity to put ourselves to such a test? Religion, it is true, bids us fight for our country, but this precept does not displace that of charity which is essentially wounded by the

⁷⁴ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, DM II 7. The person referred to is Joseph Louis Blanche, former Oratorian, then vicar general of Aix, who died in 1814.

complacency with which we relish, if I may so put it, the discomfiture we have inflicted on our brothers. Thus, it comes about that what is legitimate in its origins, like fighting the enemies of the State, becomes criminal in its consequences by giving too much scope to this exception, this dispensation from the usual rules of charity.

I will say no more on this count, not that there are not many more things that could be said, but the few lines I have sketched suffice to reveal my disapproval and the pain I feel on seeing the scandal resulting from this profanation of the evangelical ministry ...

20. To his father, in Palermo⁷⁵.

Reflections on the occasion of the death of the Princess of Vintimille. The goodness of God, who creates and sustains us in being.

[Aix,] December 3, 1806

... While the news in your letter of September 24 of the good health you are all enjoying was very consoling, I could not but be infinitely saddened at the same time by the continuing condition of the Prince of Vintimille and Mrs. de Vêrac⁷⁶; the continual stress they are undergoing cannot but be prejudicial to their health, and I have no doubt but that if they do not each of them put some limit to their understandable mourning they will eventually give way under it. But what use are the strongest arguments when one finds oneself in a situation like that? One may convince the mind but the heart still yields to the feelings that overwhelm it, and if it were not that it is against nature for situations of such violence to last, but are rather gradually and with time brought back to normality, one would be driven to despair of ever seeing our friends again in a lucid condition. God knows how sorry I am for them, but looked at in another way, don't they deserve a lot of praise too and shouldn't I be offering them my congratulations that in an era when the most sacred ties are valued by most people as simply a greater chance to pick up an inheritance, we find two creatures who can worthily mourn a kind of wealth for which there is no replacement. I take some satisfaction in coming across people with hearts like my own, and am happy to detect in others a force of feeling that I see in myself. In this light it does not surprise me at all that a heated

⁷⁵ Orig.: Aix, bibl. Méjanes, papiers Boisgelin. B. 69. We omit the first paragraph and the ending of this letter in which Eugene asks his father to write the life of his own father Charles Alexander.

⁷⁶ Mrs. de Vêrac was the sister of the Princess of Vintimille, who died during the summer.

imagination thinks it sees coming to pass in the silence of the night the dreams that fill it all during the day⁷⁷, and although I know that there have been cases when pure spirits have borrowed our mortal coils, like the angel-guide of young Tobias, for example, even so I cannot believe that God permits such marvels simply to satisfy an individual. I would rather believe that the Sovereign Lord of all, wishing in his mercy not to allow one of his creatures, on whom perhaps he has designs for his glory, to die of grief, decided to send him one or more dreams to give him some ease from the pangs of grief he is yielding himself to. This hypothesis, which has support in Scripture, would not appeal, I know, to the taste of me who want to believe that there is no kind of relation between their outlandish God, passive and powerless, and poor creatures, but it is no way repugnant to my own opinions or rather to my faith and the idea it gives me of the bounty of God who is not only our creator but also sustains us in being. But although the possibility of visions in general has been proved to my satisfaction, why appeal to a miracle in this case where there is a natural explanation? But hold hard, I must call a halt before it is too late, you see how one is led on almost imperceptibly. I was on the point of embroiling myself in a theological treatise. Even so, before leaving the topic of the Vintimilles, I want to ask you first not to forget to remember me both to the Prince whom I love more than ever and to the splendid Mrs. de Vêrac, and also to ask the latter for me, if you think you can still broach these topics, if she will be so kind as not to refuse me a favour I get for with insistence, namely, to let you have something for me which belonged to and was used by her sister; it is quite true that I don't have to look farther than my own heart for a picture and souvenir of a lady whom I have always counted amongst my dearest friends, and whom I loved as tenderly as if I were her brother, but I would find a special satisfaction in possessing something of hers, however trivial it might be ...

⁷⁷ The President, in his letter of September 24, tells how the Prince sees his dead wife each night in her room; she shows him a snuff-box with her portrait that is placed on a piece of furniture in the room, and then disappears.

21. To his father, in Palermo⁷⁸.

Named monitor of prisons by the mayor of Aix. Death of La Poire's wife. Eugene knows about his father's debts and willingly forgives him; he begs him to return to France.

Aix, January 19, 1807.

My dear friend, it is incredible that more than a month has flown by since my last letter, and what is perhaps difficult to believe, is that this is the first free time I've had to attend to my own affairs. In the three months since it pleased Mr. de Fortis, mayor of our town, to honour me with the appointment of monitor of prisons⁷⁹, I have not had what is called a minute of time to myself. New blood having been put into this work with a view to regenerating an establishment that is so precious for suffering humanity and which had fallen along with so many other institutions under the scythe of a Revolution destructive of all good, I had to devote my time and efforts entirely and uniquely to that restoration, all the more as on entering I was chosen to be on duty in the first week. I will not tell you what it cost a heart like mine to live so to speak in the midst of all the miseries and sufferings of every kind and especially when I consider the hardening and perseverance in evil of people given over to all the severity of justice and who lack for the most part the expectation of graces from Him who wipes out the crime in the act of pardoning it; whatever about this deplorable disposition of the very great majority of the unfortunates confided in part to my care, I try to obtain for them all the comforts that depend on me, whether it be by taking care that the bread the government provides for them is of good quality, or having the soup that the results of our appeals obtains for us served to them each day through the ministry of our Dames of Prisons, or in preserving them from the rigours of the season with good overcoats, or saving them from being dirty by giving them a weekly change of shirt, or giving them bed sheets when they are ill, all with money raised by appeals, or finally listening to their complaints so as to be able to inform and solicit their judges, a task I find the most painful and that my colleagues have for the most part entrusted to me. Believe

⁷⁸ Orig.: Aix, bibl. Méjanès, papiers Boisgelin. B 69. The end of the letter is omitted. Eugene speaks of La Poire's insensitivity to the memory of his deceased wife, who leaves him a considerable estate; he deplores the fact that his father and his brothers refuse to return to France, principally because of their debts.

⁷⁹ On the topic of the charitable Work for the prisons in Aix, see Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol.I, pp. 281-286. Eugene handed in his resignation by letter dated October 6, 1807, cf. Rey, op. cit., p. 80. He offers as reasons for withdrawing: "domestic affairs" ... and "special and unforeseen circumstances" that were likely to continue. Leflon, op. cit., p. 286, suggests other reasons.

me, dear friend, the man who is fulfilling this ministry of charity does not see in these criminals whose advocate he has in a sense become, anything but unfortunates in need of help. It is the task of justice, with both equity and severity, to establish guilt, our duty is to ease their sufferings by every means in our power but above all with the consolations that religion brings. Do all my colleagues fulfill this duty, so essential as it is? I cannot say; as for myself, I congratulate myself, not only on having seen to it that the quality of the bread has been improved, that one category of prisoners are more demanding and more abandoned than the rest, and of about the same age as myself, got help, and on having put right many abuses, but especially for getting the administration to consider through my report⁸⁰ that a punishment should be imposed on those catholics amongst them who failed to attend divine service on Sundays and feast days. This punishment cannot be very extensive as we have no prison police, but forfeiting their soup will be enough to hold all these Gentlemen to their obligation.

The second thing that has hindered me from writing again springs from the fulfillment of a duty, less sacred to the truth, but also quite unavoidable, and very painful too. Poor La Poire has had the misfortune to lose his wife through an apoplectic stroke⁸¹. I was in the house with her a quarter of an hour after she had the stroke, and left her only at the graveside; I can tell you, privy as you are to all my thoughts, that your friend is somewhat in my debt and that I gave him proof on that occasion that I know how to make myself totally available when it is a question of service to my friends. It would take rather long to detail all the advance warnings of this catastrophe and all its circumstances, but I will tell you as briefly as possible that during the previous four months she had had two small attacks, and that I was perhaps the only one, by I do not know what premonition, to foresee a very imminent [end]. In short, on the 11th of this month, I don't know what inspired me, I was at the house of this unfortunate woman an hour or so earlier than I usually went to keep her company. I ring the doorbell, and am very surprised when Cariolis (who has just lost his father) answers the door; he greets me with open arms saying that God has sent me to the rescue, that he was in a cruel dilemma,

⁸⁰ We know of a report dated January 6, 1807 and another dated March 24, cf. Leflon, *op. cit.*, pp. 282 and 284; Rey, *Mgr de Mazenod*, v.I, pp. 79-80.

⁸¹ La Poire, surname of the Marquis Boniface de Périér, childhood friend of President de Mazenod.

that Mrs de Périer had just had an apoplectic stroke and he does not know which way to turn; I go straight in and actually find this poor woman lying motionless, I think she had even lost consciousness; I ask if anyone has gone for a doctor, no one had thought of it; I despatch the servants, one after the other, in search of one, the manservant runs to look for his master ... The surgeon delayed coming, the servant not having found him at home, as always happens on these occasions, finally he gets there, sees the patient and does not dare to take responsibility for doing the least thing before consulting fine old Joubert who gave ample proof of his attachment to the La Poire family by coming without any hesitation although it was 8 o'clock in the evening and his own health does not allow him to go out at night time. The doctor, after quite a lengthy examination of the patient, gives me a sign that there is nothing more to be done, even so he prescribed the bloodletting that was indicated. We then carry her into her bedroom, which is on the first floor, where I cut free her dress and corsets. After this operation, I carried this enormous and inert mass of flesh to her bed, and as practically her entire weight was being supported by myself as I was holding the upper part of her body, I pulled a muscle in my arm as I slid her onto the bed (the pain has worn off). She was bled without her giving the least sign of awareness; not to leave anything undone, her feet are immersed in water heavily larded with mustard, and once again I got up on her bed, although I had my boots on, to hold her in a sitting position. Nothing has the least effect, neither the blistering at the nape of the neck, nor bathing her legs, nor bleeding, everything was tried but in vain. Alas, it can be said that she had no life in her except in her lungs which breathed in and out with great force. The celebration of the last rites of the Church was certainly not overlooked. There followed a deep calm that lasted several hours, one would have thought her asleep; but it did not delay long before convulsive movements again intervened, which told me her end was near. I then had La Poire and his son leave the room and stayed alone with the dying woman, along with two women; I kept feeling her pulse which kept pounding at a prodigious rate, and with tremendous force; the women were on their knees imploring the Lord's mercy for the poor unfortunate woman who, after two such strong warnings as her attacks had been had nevertheless postponed her reconciliation with God until Lent, while I shouted into her ear the expressions of sorrow I hoped would fill her heart and merit her grace before the tribunal of the redoubtable God whom I envisaged standing ready to pronounce her fate. God is great. Perhaps he will have taken into account to her credit some desires manifested it is said some time ago. Not that she was not a

very fine woman in the eyes of the world, but we, with the eyes of faith, we know that that is not enough. Perhaps too she would have been able to follow and ruminate in the bitterness of her heart the words the parish priest said over her in a very loud voice before giving her absolution, and those I felt obliged to offer her at the moment of her passing over. This may all be so, I even make it an object of hope, but the collapse of her brain brought on by the apoplexy makes is scarcely credible. However, I repeat, she had for some time shown good will, she was covered with relics and beads, which do not save in all truth, but make me think well of her sentiments. It was 4:30 a.m. when she died; I closed her eyes and with a mind full of the frightful picture that such a deplorable death offered me, I had to pass into La Poire's room to retrain the first transports that were lively but not too violent ...

Yes, indeed, it is all too true that one often fails to make oneself understood by letter, for from the time I spoke to you about a reunion, I have never been satisfied with any of your replies; it is almost as if from the moment you read the first word which relates to this question, your normal intelligence and perspicacity vanished into thin air and you have a mind only for sophistries; every time I frame a reply I would have to break down your arguments into syllogisms to refute sometimes the major, sometimes the minor, and always the conclusion. So that we can understand each other for the future, lets do some straight talking. Remember I am your best friend and, at this moment of time, leaving aside the other ties that bind me so dearly to you, I resort only to that quality so as to be able to address you with more freedom. Do not be afraid of scaring me, I already know about more than 140 thousand francs. You must know me well enough to be able to treat me with the utmost confidence. I recall having sent to you how I envisaged debts contracted when the times were prosperous, times when passions are at war with us with all the advantages on their side; because I have never committed any acts of folly, does it follow I must be scandalized by those of others, and if I found myself in similar circumstances to yours in your youth, wouldn't I have fared even worse? Love, respect, absolute loyalty, I add even the consideration I have for you, are so rooted in my heart, that the memory of some acts of levity would never succeed in diminishing at all all these indelible sentiments of mine, if I can use the term; the least suspicion on your part on this count would be for me the bloodiest of outrages, I would never have spoken with you about these things, with the firm intention of paying them off, if I did not believe it necessary to be fully informed of them. You do not know perhaps that I have in my pos-

session an exact copy of the state of your debts that was lying in your portfolio ...⁸².

I am stopping and before finishing I beg you to accept that if in the course of this letter, composed with a degree of heat, for it is impossible for me to be cool when I am treating of this matter, if there is found any expression that might jar on you, I withdraw it and beg you to remember that you have to keep in mind what my intention is, and that it would therefore be futile to mince one's words, to say things in a roundabout way, in words to obfuscate the issue when what one wants is to be understood.

In the meantime, bound to the sad necessity of expressing my affection for you with the point of my pen, I beg you to accept all my good wishes, both for you and for my dear brothers whom I love as much as myself. I carry all of you in my heart: alas! I cannot enfold you in my arms. Goodbye. The whole family asks me to send you all kinds of good wishes. Goodbye.

22. To Emmanuel Gaultier de Claubry, in Italy⁸³.

Eugene is edified by Emmanuel's christian behaviour in the midst of the soldiers' sarcasm. He asks for prayers to know and do God's will and attain "a more perfect state" he believes he is called to.

[Aix,] December 23, 1807.

My dear Emmanuel, ... This is the only way open to me to try and get my news through to you, for as none of your letters are making their appearance, I assume that you are not receiving mine; and if my own reaction is anything to go by, I have to conclude that you are not indifferent to this deprivation.

But where does one begin when one has so many things to say? I must know above all if you still remember me, if you have not forgotten those happy circumstances that Providence seemed to have arranged so that we might come to know each other and I might be able to appreciate you, that journey⁸⁴ that seemed so short to me and which, as it brought us

⁸² We omit here a page in which Eugene insists on the return of his father and his brothers; he demonstrates that, notwithstanding their debts, things will work out better for them in France than in Palermo.

⁸³ Text copied in Rey I, 71-73.

⁸⁴ See above, letter n. 13, note 56.

both to our destinations, was also going to part us from each other perhaps for ever, from that Eugene in a word whom you found to be in sympathy with your heart while he loved you and still loves you.

I have too high an opinion of you to fear that all these things have vanished from your mind or to be more exact from your heart where they are surely deeply engraved, if appearances do not deceive, and they ought not among children of the light, sincere worshippers of truth.

Next, I want to know everything about your combat, I mean the life you lead surrounded by the enemies of your salvation, what you are doing for God, but especially what God is doing for you; for I will not conceal from you that for lack of any others I often read over for my edification the letters you wrote me on your arrival at the army, in which you recount the miracles that the grace of Almighty God worked in you and the victories you won over the world and pleasure-seekers, the noble courage with which you carried the standard of the Cross rising above all human respect, braving the sarcasm and slights that your fidelity to this God, unknown today even amongst Christians, drew down on you. Dear friend, I say again what I said in one of my previous letters that you do not seem to have received, I shed tears when I read the account of that wretched meal when you were so basely ridiculed. From where I am I saw you among those men St. Peter speaks of: "But these people speak evil of what they do not understand; they are like brute beasts, born only to be caught and killed, and like beasts they will be destroyed, being injured in return for the injuries they have inflicted. Debauchery even by day they make their pleasure; they are unsightly blots, and amuse themselves by their trickery even when they are sharing your table ..." ⁸⁵ But these tears of compassion and grief were soon changed into transports of joy when I saw that, as you recalled to mind who he was, this Lord you serve, you behaved in a way worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ and remained fearless in face of your enemies' every stratagem, which was for them a subject of their damnation and for you of your salvation, and this victory comes to you from God, for it is a grace that he worked for you, not only because of your faith in Jesus Christ but also because you suffer on his account. Sweet effects of charity amongst Christians, which brings it about that all the members of the mystical body of which Jesus Christ is head, caput, feel and participate in the sufferings as well as the victory that each member suffers or wins. If this marvellous communion is not

⁸⁵ 2 P, 2, 12-13.

sufficiently felt, it is because one does not reflect on its excellence, for it takes its origin in the very bosom of the divinity.

Thus I share in your sufferings, my dear friend, but I also bless God for your victory, as I beg him that he will sustain you in those sentiments which work for your glory, and mine and that of the whole Church. So do not be at all shaken by the persecutions that come your way, for you know that that is our destiny, the Master having told us that "we will be hated universally on account of his name"⁸⁶. That is why we must look for our joy solely in the various afflictions that befall us and the persecutions to which we are exposed, knowing that the testing of our faith produces patience⁸⁷. Let us turn to God with fervour and we shall not be deceived, for the Lord's eyes are on the Just and his ears hearken to their prayers.

And now, shall I speak of myself? Yes, but only to ask for your prayers, to give you the charge expressly to persevere in asking God to accomplish in my regard the adorable designs whose outcome I impede by my infidelities; that he might knock, prune, reduce me to desiring only what He wills, that He might overturn all the obstacles standing in the way of my arriving at a more perfect state to which I strongly believe I am called. May he give me the grace of recognizing ever more clearly the vanities of this miserable earth, so that I see only those heavenly goods that the moth cannot corrupt. In a word may he make me worthy of the communion of saints and have me assume the place among them that he seems to have destined me for, but which it seems to me I am still far from deserving.

How I wish I were in a position to talk more clearly with you! You would be a help to me not only by your prayers, but also by your example, and at your side I would be more courageous in the battle and more assured of victory. But since such a union is unfortunately impossible, let us make this separation more endurable by a more frequent correspondence: let us fix a spiritual rendez-vous in the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ every Sunday at 10:30 a.m., an hour at which the holy sacrifice is solemnly celebrated in every Church. There we will pray at the same hour for our mutual needs, and through our union, we will so to speak compel the tender heart of our Redeemer to apply in our regard in a special way the merits of his Passion and Death.

(86) Luke 21, 17.

(87) Cf. James 1, 2-3

Goodbye, my dear friend, please send me a reply without delay and go on loving me as much as I love you.

Eugene de Mazenod

23. To his father, in Palermo⁸⁸.

Profession of faith.

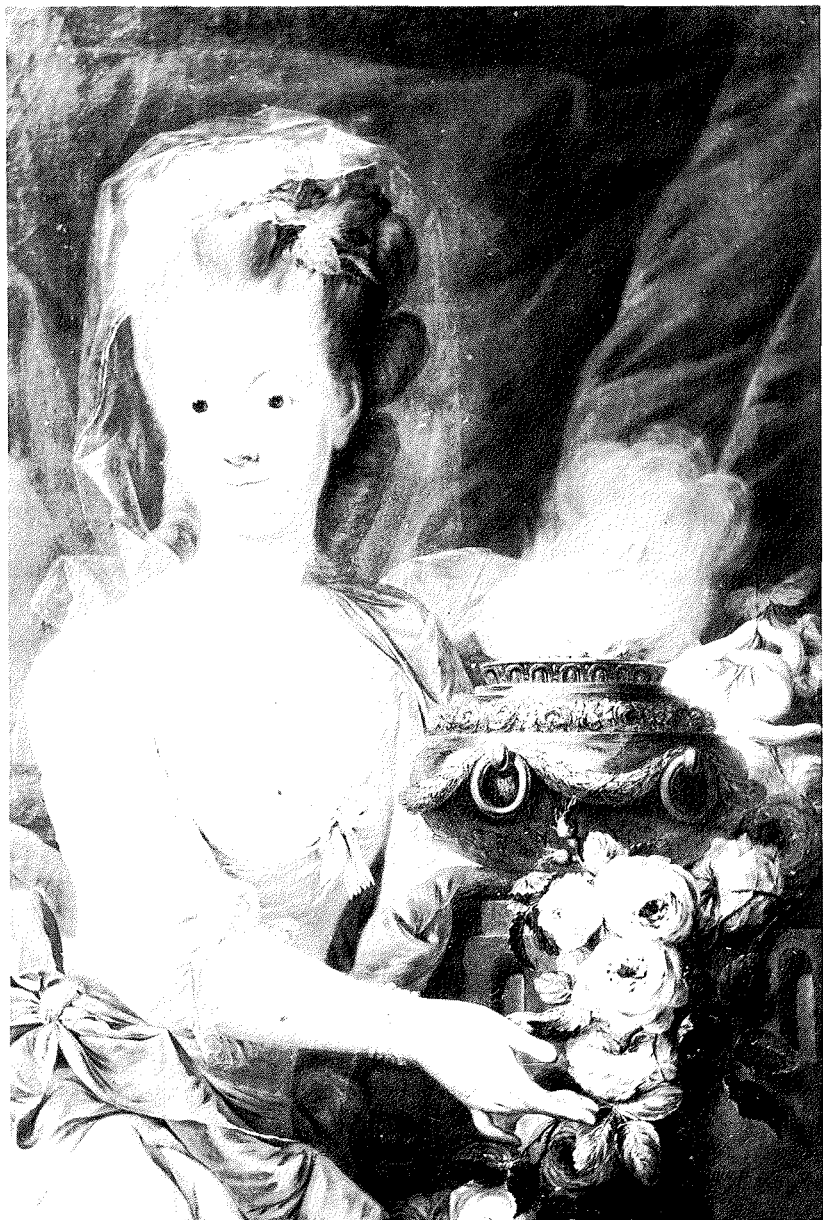
[Aix,] December 26, 1807

... I have not had much time to write you, the daily services being very heavy and those of yesterday kept me busy very late into the night. For, whatever certain people, be they who they may, may think, we are catholics and more apostolic and Roman and more strongly attached to being in communion with the Sovereign Pontiff than the majority of those who slander us. Our country is by no means a land of perdition for those who wish to work out their salvation and here God is adorned in spirit and in truth in *congregatione sanctorum* ...

⁸⁸ Orig.: Aix, bibl. Méjanes, papiers Boisgelin, B. 69. We omit the beginning and end of this short letter in which Eugene complains of no longer receiving news from Sicily. He thinks his father does not write any more because Eugene has harped too much on his relatives' return.



Charles-Antoine de Mazenod (1745-1820), Eugene's Father. Portrait in oil painting kept at the Hotel de Boisgelin at Aix.



Marie-Rose Joannis (1760-1851), Eugene's Mother. Portrait in oil painting kept at the Oblate General House at Rome.

1808-1809

24. Prayers ¹

a) *On rising in the morning; b) while dressing; c) for a perfect conversion; d) against relapsing into sin; e) interior acts; f) for a watchful spirit; g) important truths for living well in the world; h) to offer his sleep to God; i) on going to bed.*

[1808; 19812-1816]²

a) On rising in the morning.

Nox praecessit, dies appropinquavit. Abjiciamus opera tenebrarum (Rm 13, 12)

Open, my God, my heart to your love as my eyes open to the daylight; it is by your grace that I begin this day, do not let me to spend it in empty amusements. Alas! the time you give me cost the blood of your son, would I be so wretched as not to consecrate it entirely to your service? *Mane astabo tibi, mane exaudies vocem meam* (Ps 5, 5).

b) While dressing.

Induimini Domium Nostrum Jesum Christum (Rm 13, 14).

May these clothes truly serve to keep me mindful, my God, of my lost innocence ... Will what should be source of shame for me be one of pride and vanity?

¹ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives: DM V-7b. A notebook of eight pages all seemingly written with the same pen and on the same occasion: the lettering on the latter pages however is less well-formed and shows signs of being written in haste. While prayers a, b, e, g, h, i, might have been taken from some book, others are clearly composed by Eugene himself, e.g., c, d, f.

² It is difficult to date these texts with precision. Some expressions, where the influence of unstilled passions is still apparent, (c, d, and especially g), and the fear of lapsing "if the same occasions of sin arise" (f), suggest that these prayers might have been written in 1807-1808, after the Holy Friday experience of 1807 but before entry into the seminary, for example during a few weeks' holiday taken during the summer with his grandmother at St. Julien. On the other hand, we find practically the same language being used in the retreat notes of 1812-1816, during the first years of ministry at Aix. It might date, for example, to the period of his convalescence in 1814 (cf. f: "a necessary break").

c) For a perfect conversion.

How still imperfect, my God, is my conversion; the root of sin lives on in me; the thoughts and memory of the world are still powerfully at work; the things I have renounced retain their hold on my imagination, and reawaken baleful images. My heart, still weak, is quite disturbed by it, and in the midst of this disturbance it feels all its passions coming back to life; it takes but little for it to be ensnared. Is this what it is to be perfectly God's? my inconstancy in the little good I do, my God, is no less humiliating for me; full of good desires, I am often satisfied with their formulation, almost all my zeal is used up in the making of plans; I fluctuate between yielding to grace and to my own desires, while time flows by, I journey swiftly towards eternity, and I am always the same. Shall I all my life be the plaything of the enemy of my salvation? Make firm, my God, my inconstancy, wholly change my heart; inspire within me, for my salvation, the same zeal I showed for my damnation. *Sicut enim exhibuistis membra vestra servire ... iniquitati ... ita nunc exhibete ... servire justitiae* (Rm 6, 19).

d) Against relapsing into sin.

Have I come back to you, my God, only to burden myself with the greater crime of falling back into sin? In all conscience, is my ingratitude to match the greatness of your love? Am I to meet all your bounty with but a new tissue of sins? My God, shorten the course of my life, rather than permit the demon to reenter my heart.

Can I hide from myself how awful such a state would be, my God, after what you have yourself made known to us in the Gospel? A sinner who is still unconverted is in the power of but a single demon, but a sinner who relapses lets a legion of impure spirits into his soul.

Even so, my God, I feel within myself a fatal flaw, which while alerting me to my weakness, gives me too every reason to be afraid; I feel that I am carrying in a fragile vessel the treasure of the grace with which you have enriched me; in view of this danger, how can I not be afraid? I turn to you, my God, God of goodness, Father of mercy, remove far from me every evil occasion which has in times past been so fatal; give me the strength to sacrifice to you everything that might bring my passions back to life, close my eyes to all the vanities of the world, make me insensible to those of which I will be an involuntary witness; protect my heart from all the wicked impressions it may receive from the different objects which surround it, in a word, inspire me with indifference, distaste, hatred even, if needs be, for all that could claim a share in a heart that should be

wholly yours. Alas, I have come so late to serve you, I have waited almost until the last hour: at least, my God, let nothing in the world have power any more to separate me from you, or deflect me from your service. *Neque mors, neque vita, neque ... nulla creatura ... poterit nos separare a caritate Dei* (Rm 8, 39).

e) Interior acts.

1. I believe, my God, strengthen my faith; I hope, affirm my hope, I love you, redouble my love; I detest my sins, increase my repentance.

2. Guide me in my actions by your wisdom; effect the conversion of my heart by your goodness, sustain me in the hour of temptations by the power of your grace.

3. Make me, my God, attentive in my prayers, sober in my meals, exact in my duties.

4. Make me to walk ever in your presence, it is you, my God, who direct my steps; may I never lose sight of you, and if you are always present with me, my God, how can I offend you?

5. Convince me thoroughly of the nothingness of creatures, the shortness of time, the length of eternity; by this means, I shall prepare myself for death, fear your judgments; I shall avoid hell, win heaven. Amen!

f) A beautiful prayer to obtain the spirit of watchfulness.

A bitter experience has taught me all too well, my God, that dissipation has been for me a source of sin: how many times, led on by this dissipation, have I lost sight of you, my God? How many times have I forgotten my most essential duties; and allowed myself to be lured by the love of creatures; today by the prior intervention of your grace, at a time when I was most unworthy of it, I have come back to you, my God; at last I have lest the path of iniquity, to enter in the way of justice; what happiness for me! what good reason for thanksgiving!

But I cannot hide the fact, my God; I am ever the sinner; my passions, ever alive or at least ever ready to rear their heads, forever urge me against my duties, and my still sluggish heart pays them heed. Should the same occasions present themselves, I feel a sense of danger, they may induce me to abandon your service.

Even so on the pretext of a necessary break, I yield too much to my senses, pleasure and dissipation; I allow myself to be led too much by my vivacity; I do not take adequate precautions against my concupiscence,

the impressions of the world, the devil's wiles, I do not watch enough over myself, over the dangers to which I am exposed. A baneful state for salvation. Open my eyes to the danger, my God; reawaken my zeal, strengthen my faith: terrified by the danger to which I am exposed, sustained by the power of your grace, I will bemoan my condition; I will pray with more ardour; I will redouble my vigilance so as to work efficaciously for my salvation. *Spiritu meo in praecordiis meis de mane vigilabo ad te* (Is. 26,9).

g) Important truths that must be deepened from time to time if one is to live well³.

1. What precautions have to be observed to save oneself in the world?
2. What does religion have to say on the choice of one's friends?
3. What characteristics must our faith have if it is to make us just?
4. How dangerous is the dominant passion; how is it to be uprooted?
5. What are the necessary dispositions for assisting at the holy sacrifice of the Mass?
6. Progress that has to be made in virtue: in what does it consist?
7. In what sense is every Christian to live a retired life?
8. What means are there of preserving a sincere piety?
9. Uselessness of human supports, seek them only in Jesus Christ.
10. In what does the lax life consist; to what extent is it criminal and how commonplace is it? *Intellectum da mihi et vivam*.

Short reflections on these truths.

1. To save oneself in the world, one must frequent it only by necessity; and when one is obliged to enter it, one must judge according to the rules of faith everything that happens there: in this perspective, how frightful the world is. *Mundus totus in maligno positus est* (I John 1, 19).

2. One must always choose as friends true Christians, and christianly love these friends in God and for God; one will discover such friends if one has an upright heart. *Amico fideli nulla est comparatio ... qui metuunt Dominum invenient illum* (Si 6, 15).

³ These truths are applicable to the laity. Eugene could have written them in 1807-1808, but also after 1812 to give them to the members of the Youth Congregation.

3. One's faith does not avail for salvation if it be not enlightened, submissive and active, if to the small extent that one sounds out one's own depths, one feels one's faith to be defective in one or other of these points. Is this not a hard thought?

Tu fidem habes ... ostende ... ex operibus. (Jn. 2, 18).

4. The dominant passion is dangerous because of the shadows in which it hides itself, and more dangerous again because of the pretexts it suggests for us to allow it to subsist, To fight it vigorously and relentlessly is the only way to conquer it. *Tolle ... unigenitum quem diligis* (Gen. 22,2).

5. One must bring to holy Mass an attention that is full of respect and a redoubled spirit of holiness and sacrifice. We offer ourselves therein with Jesus Christ; could we then fail to enter into these holy dispositions? *In omni loco sacrificatur mihi oblatio munda* (Mal. 1,11)

6. Can one not advance continually in virtue, when one reflects that one is a disciple of Jesus Christ and that one must serve as an example for others? The signs of this progress are an evermore lively faith, a veritable desire never to lose sight of God; a perfect detachment from creatures. *Ascensiones in corde suo disposuit* (Ps. 83, 6).

7. God speaks to us in different ways to reawaken our piety; but we hear his voice only in so far as we take care to enter into ourselves; and we will enter veritably into ourselves only to the extent that we distance ourselves from the world and silence our passions. *Non in commotione Dominus* (I Ch 19, 11).

8. To conserve a true piety, one must: 1° take safeguards against dissipation; 2° reflect on the imperceptible diminution of piety; 3° fear the least falling off; 4° pray often, and prefer public prayer to all other. *Videte, vigilate et orate*, (Mk 13, 33).

9. There are no solid supports except those that go to the heart; no creature furnishes us with anything of the sort. God supplies their lack; but we must turn sincerely to him. *Vana salus hominis, in Deo faciemus virtutem* (Ps. 107, 13.14).

10. The lax life excludes all virtues and leads to all vices, let us not ask in what it consists. We fall into laxity from the moment we love ourselves too much. Lack of mortification and sensuousness are the principles of this vice; eternal damnation will be its end. *Neque adulteri, neque molles ... regnum Dei possidebunt* (I Cor. 6, 9).

h) To offer God one's sleep.

My God, who have consecrated man's rest by taking rest yourself in the course of your mortal life, I offer you the sleep that I am going to take in honour of your resting; grant that in taking it I do not seek to pander to my laziness, but give way only to necessity, and to your ordering and that by it I may live at all times in your presence, and as it were in your sight. *Sive vigilemus, sive dormiamus, simul cum illo vivamus* (I Th 5, 10).

i). When one goes to bed.

I perceive, my God, in the rest I am going to take, the image of the death to which I am condemned; a sad memorial, but one that is really needed to mortify my passions; I accept it, my God, with resignation, this judgment pronounced against my sin; I await sleep with this thought in mind, may it ward away evil from my heart. *Memorare novissima tua et in aeternum non peccabis* (Si 7, 40).

25. Extract from "Conversation avec un janséniste, sur les convulsions"⁴.

Eugene sees no hope of converting his uncle Roze-Johannis; the latter, however, is counting on bringing Eugene over to his views on Jansenism.

Aix, February 17, 1808

... Yesterday, Tuesday February 16, 1808, I called as I often do on Mr. Roze-Johannis, a Jansenist, one of the most zealous, a title he holds in honour and gives himself publicity. He is besides my relative, my Breton-style uncle, perhaps my friend, at least he lets me think so, and for my part I have a lot of reasons to be quite fond of him⁵.

In our conversations we always get around to talking about some point of dogma or morality, and frequently, I would go so far as to say invariably, he brings the discussion around to Jansenism, for he is as anxious to get on to this as I am keen to avoid it. The explanation is quite simple, for I have accepted that it is impossible ever to bring back a 50

⁴ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, DM II-6a: Notes on Jansenism. We publish only the paragraphs at the beginning of this 5-page text in which Eugene gives a description of his uncle whom he sees frequently, and affirms that in all their conversations they speak about dogma and morality. The account centres especially on a seance of convulsionaries at which Roze-Joannis was present in Paris in 1782 or 1784.

⁵ He was Mrs. de Mazenod's advisor and confidant from the time of her return to France in 1795.

year old man, with a keen and lively imagination, brought up in the Oratory, who entered that Congregation and remained in it for some time, and so inhaled all the poison of the doctrine that these Gentlemen sought to drum into those deemed fit to advance the work, a man who cannot number Christian humility among his qualities and who after publicly displaying those opinions which made him acceptable to the entire sect, will never recant his errors, short of a miracle.

He, on the contrary, sees in me a young man (steady, it is not my intention to draw a self-portrait here), suffice it to say that he attaches sufficient importance to me not to neglect trying to convert me, even were it to take many years of hard work, which he would not regard as wasted were he to succeed; his understanding of my character makes him see in a proselyte like me a veritable “conquest”, to use his own term, and there are no lengths he would not go to bring me to a knowledge of the “Truth”; but up to now grace has been “lacking” to me, and while waiting for it to bring me under its sway, my uncle does not despair of my salvation, provided I ask God fervently to enlighten me and listen with as much submission of mind as I show bodily passivity, so as to understand the arguments by which he wishes to destroy the “prejudices” I am imbued with.

I have wanted to know for a long time what to think about the convulsions I have often hard spoken of in different ways; so I gently brought my relative to admit that he was present at one of those events, concerning which, like Soanen, bishop of Senez, he declined to comment. Here is his account which he began only after protesting before God that he would neither add nor subtract anything ...

26. To Miss Eugenie de Mazenod, in Aix⁶

Eugene is going to enter the seminary. Eugenie is asked to help her mother come to accept this decision. His regrets at not being with the family, although he must soon go away for eight months.

St. Julien, June 21, 1808

... You saw the consecration⁷, no doubt you were also at the Corpus Christi procession; you have the celebrations all to yourself; we poor her-

⁶ Orig.: Chateau Boisgelin, St-Martin-des-Pallières. We omit the beginning of the letter: Eugene complains of his sister's laziness in not writing.

⁷ On March 25, 1808, Bishop Champion de Cicé ordained Bishop F. de Bausset-Roquefort, bishop of Vannes and future Archbishop of Aix, in the cathedral of Saint-Sauveur, Aix.

Corpus Christi fell on June 16 in 1808.

mits here see nothing but sky and rocks, and that's how it should be you'll say since our conversation should be in heaven, but before leaving earth I would have liked to spend a period of time with you, and circumstances seem to be against this, for I don't see any possibility of going to Aix until the Emperor has passed by; you understand that I would have to join the troop⁸, as I would have no reason that would dispense me if I were in the neighbourhood. On the other hand because of the harvest you cannot come and spend some time here, as you have to supervise things around Arc, all of this annoys me a little or, to be more precise, a lot.⁹

I don't dare write yet to mother on the matter I asked uncle to speak to her about, until I know he has done so¹⁰. Supposing as I presume that she knows about it when you get my letter, I am asking you to play down anything she could construe as being over-harsh in this decision which is neither premature nor precipitate; to begin with remind her we are all bound to submit to the Master's will and obey his voice, then have her see that we are not talking about separation but only of an absence of eight or nine months; stress this point which is the exact truth and disposes without more ado of the distorted picture one gets when one sees everything from one single viewpoint. I asked uncle not to speak about this matter except to mother and you. I am asking you the same thing; please, not a word about it in the house. When it has been looked at from all angles, and the moment comes, then will be the time to speak. In the meantime let us speak about it only between ourselves and with God. I will say no more on this topic, we will talk at greater length and to better effect face to face.

I learned at Marseilles that Montaignu is marrying Miss de Pierrevost, the same mademoiselle who was presented to me, and whom I saw in a house where she came while I was there. She is not so terribly ugly as they said, but nobody will be tempted to describe her beautiful. As for ourselves, dear Eugenie, we will play a little harder to get, I think, and in the next two months, God willing, one or two people are going to very

⁸ Napoleon had passed some months at Bayonne and was busy with Spanish affairs. He was confidently expected to return to Paris by way of Marseilles, Aix and Lyon but, in July-August, he went by way of Toulouse, Bordeaux, La Rochelle, etc.

We have a declaration of the Mayor of Aix, dated August 1, 1808, in which we read: "Mr. de Mazenod is a member of the guard of honour ... in the calvary section." Orig." Postulation Archives, DM VII 4a.

⁹ Eugene spent May and June at his grandmother's in St. Julien.

¹⁰ A little before June 14, Eugene disclosed to Roze-Joannis his decision to enter the seminary and charged him to inform Mrs. de Mazenod, cf. Eugene's letter to his mother, June 14, 1808. The letter to Roze-Joannis has not been located.

disappointed. When I hinted that we didn't need to be in such a hurry, you ought to have understood why I said it, if you hadn't forgotten a conversation I had with you nearly six months ago¹¹. We will see our boat come peacefully in, and you will always have a ready excuse to play for time by saying you don't feel you can decide anything without speaking with me. You have no idea how happy it makes me when I think that, by doing what is God's will in my regard, I am bringing about a big change in your own position¹².

Goodbye, dear sister, with all my love and affection, and please pray for me.

Eugene

27. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix¹³.

Reasons for his decision to enter the seminary. Eugene will always stay in Provence and be more united with his mother than if he were married.

St. Julien, June 29, 1808

Darling mamma, before I shared with you the designs the Lord's mercy has for me, I wanted to ask my uncle to broach the subject with you, to help you to see the thing in its true light and so as not to upset you unintentionally, as I know how tender your heart is. However many pains one may take to explain something in a letter, it is difficult to foresee every objection or even the different perceptions people have. That is why I asked my uncle, a man worthy of appreciating God's ways, to communicate to you the Master's designs we are all bound to obey on pain of damnation, to answer any objections you might make, in short, through telling you my reasons, to get your approval for a project that certainly comes from God, as it has passed all the tests required of any inspiration that seems unusual, and it has been sanctioned by all the persons who hold his place in my regard. It remains, my dear, darling mother, for me

¹¹ Thus Eugene's decision was taken at the beginning of 1808 and Eugenie was aware of it.

¹² A search had been underway for some years for a husband for Eugenie. There had already been negotiations with several families who judged the dowry too modest. Eugene's entry into the clerical state will allow Mrs. de Mazenod to increase her daughter's dowry.

¹³ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB 1-7. We omit the last paragraph of the letter, where Eugene speaks of his grandmother.

now to reassure you about the thing that might seem hardest to bear from a natural point of view. God is not demanding here sacrifices beyond our strength. There aren't going to be any heart-rending partings, departures without coming back. As the Lord is my witness, what he wants of me is that I renounce a world where it is almost impossible to find salvation, such is the power of apostasy there; that I devote myself especially to his service and try to reawaken the faith that is becoming extinct amongst the poor; in a word, that I make myself available to carry out any orders he may wish to give me for his glory and the salvation of souls he has redeemed by his precious blood. You can see from what I say, dear mother, that all these things can be done in our own countryside, and that, far from renouncing my family, I mean to remain even more attached to it than if, staying in the world, I established myself in it, took a wife, set up my own home, and had children, all things which, far from knitting together the bonds that bind us, are capable of weakening them; at least it is clear that all these new bonds of affection, which would be of the same order as that I have for you, that is to say equally commanded by nature, could not but take away from the love I wish to keep for you alone.

I do not believe that it means a lot to you to see my name perpetuated in this vale of tears. This vanity did once steal its way into my heart and would have led to my losing all the graces the Lord was reserving for me. Now I do not see, and no doubt you are the same, any other necessity than to see them — our names — written in the book of life.

So what does it amount to, and what is left for us to offer the Lord? A few months' absence. This means enduring, for the sake of our good God and conforming ourselves to his holy will, the same pain that a thousand forever recurring circumstances compel us to endure every year without any benefit to our souls¹⁴.

I will not discuss this matter any more with you for the present; we will talk at greater length when I am in Aix. I intend to go when Emile gets here. Then we will all come together in August so as to leave our darling mother as little as possible by herself. In the meantime let us all ask

¹⁴ In the preceding letter dated June 21, Eugene invited his mother to come to St. Julien, but foresaw that this would be impossible in the coming month; and, to accustom his mother to the idea of separation, he added: "We are having a run of bad luck in the family, not a year goes by without us spending five or six months apart from one another."

the Lord to deign to disclose to her the full extent of the submission we owe to his sovereign but always paternal decrees ...¹⁵.

28. Resolutions taken during the retreat made on entering the seminary early in October 1808¹⁶

Eugene is unworthy to live among the saints who live in the seminary. Sorrow for his sins, but confidence in God's mercy, and gratitude. Resolutions: nothing against God, faithfulness in small things, obedience, regularity, fraternal charity, respect for priests, humility, penances and mortifications, struggle to overcome his temperament and self-love, poverty and simplicity.

Paris, between October 12 and 19, 1808¹⁷

I cannot pretend that I am other than unworthy, and every much unworthy, of living among the saints who form this truly heavenly house; I must abase myself profoundly in view of iniquities which should have closed to me for ever entrance into the sanctuary. My sins must be always before me so as never to forget I am last of all in the eyes of the just God who allots each his place with no regard for our breeding, which too comes from his hands, or to the upbringing we may have had. So I must politely and joyfully put up with the little vulgarities, lack of respect, etc., that I may experience, reflecting that the soul of the person upsetting me is infinitely more precious and beautiful in God's eyes than is my own, and that if I could only see me as I really am, however great their charity, they would not be able to endure me.

But it is not enough to keep my sins before me, morning, noon, and night, this would be a sterile exercise if not accompanied by a sincere,

¹⁵ His grandmother was hurt by Eugene's decision but accepted it with resignation. She wrote to Mrs. de Mazenod in July 1808: "It has really been a wrench to be separated from our dear Eugene, his company was really sweet and agreeable to me, his virtues make me love him more than I can say. He did right to go to you. When he has explained what he wants to do, you will want to see him and have him do some reflection that a plan of this magnitude requires. A strong vocation is necessary for so holy a state ..." Mrs. de Mazenod too came to accept her son's departure, but it was only some years later that she really accepted his vocation. Mr. de Mazenod learnt of it only in 1809, see doc. 56 below.

¹⁶ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, DM IV-1.

¹⁷ Eugene entered the seminary on October 12, 1808 (Eugene to his mother, February 28, 1809). According to the letter to his grandmother, dated October 18, the retreat ended on the 19th, the Feast of the Holy Virgin's Interior Life. J.H. Icard, in *Traditions de la Compagnie des Prêtres de Saint-Sulpice* ... (Paris, 1886, p.39), writes that the retreat at the beginning of the academic year lasts six to eight days and ends on a feast day. Eugene's notes were probably written between October 12 and 19.

constant, and deep sorrow over having been capable of such frightful ingratitude towards a God, a Father, a Saviour, who has furnished me with so many gifts from my tenderest childhood; yes, I will say to my God, I will indeed go over in my mind all my life's excesses, but this will be in the bitterness of my heart, with eyes wet with tears, a soul racked with grief, *recogitabo omnes annos meos in amaritudine animae meae* [Is. 38, 15].

Even so these sentiments, just though they are, must not wholly fill my heart, fear of the dreadful judgments of a just God must not so fill it that the trust I must have in his mercy cannot find entrance. Ah Lord, what would become of me, if I dared not approach your adorable heart to consume in the midst of the flames of your love all that must pass through that furnace if it is not to be fuel for the accursed fires of hell. No, no, my sorrow will not be like that of the traitor Judas; after acknowledging I have betrayed, sold, abandoned, crucified the Just One, I will not become my own enemy and flee his holy and blessed presence, I will run to him, I will throw myself at his feet, confess my ingratitude, and he will pardon me: *Dixi: Confiteor adversum me injustitiam meam Domino, et tu remisisti impietatem peccati mei* [Ps. 31,5]. This God of mercy came among us only to call sinners, it is to them he addresses his gentlest words, he pursues them, holds them to his heart, carries them on his shoulders. Ah Lord, I do not ask for that, I will count myself very lucky if you enable me to follow in your footsteps, but above all forgive me, deliver me from the unnumbered host of enemies who are ever set on my downfall, strengthen me at least against their onslaughts, I place my trust in you alone, Lord, hear my prayer *quoniam in te Domine speravi, tu exaudies me Domine Deus meus* [Ps. 37, 16].

The soul is great, it can embrace an abundance of objects, it can be moved simultaneously by a diversity of feelings. And so without gainsaying the feelings of sorrow, and at the same time of utter trust in God's mercy, it must also be employed in the thanksgiving it owes to this good Father for the signal favours he has generously wished to grant it. It must bless him every moment of the day for having generously willed to cast a merciful glance upon it, one of his powerful glances that do such great things; it must offer itself every day as a holocaust to thank him for snatching him from the hands of the devil, from the jaws of hell, it must be melted, emptied, at the thought that not only has this excellent, rich, generous Master displayed his power on it behalf to withdraw it from vice, but he has willed to choose for it a home, to call it to a state which, in bringing it close to J.C., places it in the happy necessity of centering its

thoughts solely on this divine Saviour, of serving him with more ardour, loving him without cease, and all the while he brings us to him in the society of the saints, who are willing to abase themselves so far as to call me their brother.

Still it is not sufficient to give thanks for God's gifts, and be filled with his bounty, I must also dispose myself dutifully to preserve grace, and try by my faithfulness to merit new favours.

These then are the resolutions I take, and will keep, with the help of God.

There is no question of speaking here of what is against God's law, the mere fact of crossing the threshold of the seminary is a proof of the resolution made never to commit a mortal sin and of one's horror at anything that might wound in its essence the divine majesty. "Nothing against God" is the wholly indispensable watchword of every Christian however feeble his fervour; a man aspiring to the clerical state must go infinitely further. Horror then, the greatest horror before anything that might be an offence to God in his goodness. But more, I must tie myself down to the most scrupulous fidelity in even the smallest things.

Absolute devotedness to the orders of the superiors, perfect submission to their least command, however puerile it seems to someone who has lived to be 26 in the fullest independence, even as regards piety.

Scrupulous obedience to the rule, even though I may seem over-meticulous in the eyes of my confreres.

A friendly, generous charity towards all my brothers, respect for all superiors, trust in many of them. I will be more self-critical and try to imitate the most fervent, meticulous, interior amongst my confreres. I will show a special respect, at least in my mind, towards those who are already enabled with the priesthood, and in general I will hold this sublime character in the deepest respect, making an interior act of humility whenever I meet a priest, that is, acknowledging and confessing humbly before God that I am unworthy of ever being clothed with a character so awesome at least to a man who has had the misfortune to live for so long in forgetfulness of God.

Humility, above all humility, must be the foundation of the building of my salvation. I will look upon myself as the least in the seminary, and I will often tell myself that this is no game but on the contrary there is an enormous distance between my brothers and myself, since in effect it is impossible that any of them should have so many faults to reproach him-

self with as I do, and that of them all I am the one who does the least penance although I have the most need of it.

Could I ever have any doubt about my very great need of penance! It is my fond hope (and this is the source of my strength) that O.L.J.C. has restored me to his good graces by ratifying the sentence of absolution given me when contrite and humbled I confessed the sins of my whole life, but I know full well that this very fact of absolution from guilt leaves me to expiate and cancel out the punishment, and must I not be fully convinced that in the light of the enormity and number of my faults, this expiation must be the business and occupation of my whole life.

But what form shall my penance take? It would no doubt be a fine thing to imitate those happy and holy saints who lacerated their flesh in proportion to the indulgence they had shown it. As guilty, even more guilty than they, after imitating and even outdoing them in their sins, it would be desirable for me to follow their example as to the means they took to appease God's wrath and satisfy his justice.

But this is where all my cowardice stands revealed: this body, unworthy tool of sin, this body which has so often drawn my soul into excesses which turned it into God's irreconcilable enemy, this body, secretly groaning under the empire that the soul has reimposed on it by God's powerful grace, indignantly refuses to become itself the instrument of its own punishment.

Quite the opposite, it does all it can to sever the saving yoke holding it in a submission which will be to its benefit on the great day of the resurrection; in alliance with the evil spirit, together they seem to have conspired my damnation. They stop at nothing to injure me, they leave no stone unturned in their effort to make me fall again. The means I use to go to God are often the very weapons they use to fight me with, the society of saints, the temple of the Most High, spiritual reading, prayer, nothing is sacred to them, everything serves as a battle ground, in a word, it is one continual assault. One must fight from dawn to dusk.

Where the evil is so great, one must of necessity use some remedy, and since I am still too cowardly to dare to strike this vile heap of dust, it will be necessary to find some other way to punish it, in default of the discipline it refuses. This then is what I propose in the expectation that a longer stay in the seminary will show me some new way of mortifying myself.

In the morning, as soon as the cleric authorized to get me up has left my room I will leap from my bed, and not begin the day with an act of laziness, hugging the blankets (to coin a phrase).

During prayer I will stay kneeling down for the two 15 minute periods, however uncomfortable it is; if I need to sit down, I will allow myself this indulgence only when the others are standing¹⁸.

At dinner I will never allow myself to have a second helping from the same course, even if the portions are very small, in which case, which does not happen often, I will fill up with an extra piece of bread¹⁹.

As Friday is a fast day for me, I will miss breakfast completely, but as the house regulation forbids me to absent myself from supper, and against my normal practice, I will have to eat something in the evening, I will cut back on something at dinner so that my body feels the punishment inflicted on it.

Light as these penances are, they will do for now; but to follow the advice of St. Francis de Sales who says somewhere that one must over-emphasize the punishment of the body, a poor donkey which does not bear all the blame, I will try above all to mortify my spirit, to stifle the disorderly desires of my heart, bring this will of mine into submission; I will do all I can to overcome my temperament, to this end I will make use of every occasion that presents itself, and they will surely not be lacking. I will not forget, that being proud through and through, my sole concern will be to subdue it. So I will give thanks to God that, while during my sojourn in this world I was accustomed to win approval, and was pampered, feted, and respected by all around me, I will give thanks to God, I say, for finding myself here one of a crowd of people who, more virtuous than I, will attract all the attention, or even if they do not attract more notice than I, I will rejoice in this equality that leaves me myself in the shadows.

Independent until my entrance into this holy house, it is inevitable that I will find submission and obedience hard, especially in the matter of choice and of study methods; and so I will try to make a virtue of all these sources of opposition, I will rejoice especially because, enjoying in the world a reputation for intelligence and education, I am going to forfeit this advantage here in applying myself to the studies which will I hope be very fruitful for me, but in which it will be impossible for me to shine, or I may

¹⁸ Ms. deleted: "At breakfast I will be satisfied with the piece of bread that is given me, without asking for a second piece, as the first is quite enough to keep me going until dinner."

¹⁹ Mr. deleted: "In the evening, one helping of the first course will be enough for my supper; I have been following this diet since the first day I entered the seminary; I am keeping well on it in body and soul alike."

even seem to be weaker than those who are in reality of a lower level than I, with my little or no practise in speaking Latin and never having been constrained to the scholastic method in my studies, and being too old to be able to hope to learn new tricks. This humiliating situation will be very good for me because self-love is not the most mortified part of me. To counteract more and more this self-love, I will not let slip any opportunity to bring it to heel, even indirectly.

And so it is not enough for me to congratulate myself on having disclosed myself to my director for the person I am, and indeed as I used to be which was a great victory that God's grace gave me (and which my self-love resisted, with many a specious argument) but I must too be disposed to share everything, even the most humiliating things, if my director judges it, I do not say necessary, but even merely useful.

Finally, to punish myself for the creature comforts I over-indulged in in the world, and the kind of fondness I had for certain vanities, I shall observe poverty in my cell, and live simply outside it. I will do without a fire so far as I can without excessive discomfort, I will see to my own needs, sweep my room, etc.

In a word, not having, unfortunately for me, imitated St. Aloysius Gonzaga (whom I took as my personal patron from the moment I decided to enter the clerical state), not having imitated him, I say, in his innocence, being too cowardly to imitate him in his severe penance, I will endeavour at least to come as close as I can to his spirit of mortification and abnegation, begging him to be so kind as to intercede for me with O.L. so that, together with the most holy Virgin to whom I dedicate myself in a special way, they may obtain for their poor servant the gift of true penance, a great love of God, an unfailing horror of sin, a holy vocation and perseverance in the good intentions the Lord has been so kind as to inspire me with. Amen, amen, amen.

29. For Grandmother²⁰

The seminary is a place of paradise; Eugene's experience is one of holy and almost continual joy, but he does not forget his family for a single moment. End of the retreat. Meaning of the Feast of the Interior Life of the Holy Virgin. The retreat regulation.

²⁰ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives. FB 1-6: a letter from Eugene to his grandmother Catherine Elizabeth Joannis, née Bonnet.

From the Seminary of St. Sulpice, October 18, 1808.

If you were in Paris, dear good mother, along with the chosen one of the family, I would be the happiest of men. What a life we have here! The days simply fly by, yet despite their shortness they are full in the eyes of the Lord. Here everything brings us to him, there is not a single moment of the day that is not his. The least thing we do has its value as everything is done with an eye to the obedience we owe him. In a word, the seminary, when one enters into it in the spirit that everyone who is called to the clerical state ought to have, is a veritable paradise on earth. Truly I would savour all its delights, and I would be much too happy, if the thought did not keep coming back to me of the distance that separates me from the people so tenderly dear to my heart, and mingle some bitterness with his holy and almost continual joy that I experience. You must not believe that for some reason I chase away the thought. On the contrary, as this sacrifice of my heart's feelings is all I have to offer the Lord, all others being as nothing, I enjoy following you in your different occupations. I often accompany them with my little prayer. For example, we are at holy mass at the moment you are getting out of bed. Now do you really think for one moment that your child does not ask J.C., who was during his blessed life the most excellent of sons, that your day and entire life may be filled with blessings and graces? And when I have the happiness to receive this God of love, which is very often in this holy house, are you really ready to believe that when I give myself wholly to him to receive him wholly in return, I do not include you too in my offering, so you can have a share in my bargain?

In this way I am continually present with my good mothers. And so that you can follow me too and get a taste in this practice of the consolation I experience myself, I will make sure to send you our daily timetable, when I find out what it is. Up to now I can only speak of the life we are leading during the retreat, which is now unfortunately coming to an end. We are finishing tomorrow with a feast which fills the seminary with its fragrance and is proper to it, it is the feast of the Interior Life of the Holy Virgin, that is to say of all the virtues and the greatest marvels of the Omnipotent. What a lovely feast! And how fully I am going to celebrate with the most holy Virgin all the great things God did in her! Oh, what an advocate at God's side! Let us be dedicated to her; she is the glory of your sex. We profess that we wish to approach her son only through her, and we look to receive everything from her holy intercession.

But you will be annoyed if I do not tell you about my health. It is excellent; and from day one I have settled into the seminary as if I had

spent my whole life here. I find it impossible to eat the quantity that is given us, especially at evening time. The portions are huge, so much so that I have never had to go asking for second helpings.

This is how our timetable goes during the retreat. We get up at 5 o'clock' at 5:30, prayer until 6:30; we kneel for a quarter of an hour and stand for a quarter of an hour in alternation, whoever wants to sit may do so. At 6:30 we go down to mass. At 7, we go back to our rooms, if one has received holy communion one may hear, if one wishes, a second mass. At 8 o'clock, breakfast. At 8:15, the Little Office of the Holy Virgin. In one's room or in church until 9:15, where one goes to an informal sermon called a talk; after the talk, a quarter of an hour's meditation on it. Then back to one's room until 11:45. One emerges to go and make particular examen in common, which is preceded by a reading of two chapters from the New Testament, on one's knees; each day chapters of the Old and New Testaments are set to be read in one's room. At the angelus, we go down to the refectory, where we get a fine soup, a main course with plenty of meat, an excellent piece of boiled beef, and dessert; during the meal a chapter is read from the Old Testament, some pious book, and the martyrology. After dinner, recreation until 1:45. Vespers and compline of the Holy Virgin. Back to one's room. At 3:15, a talk as in the morning, and a quarter of an hour's meditation on it. Matins and Lauds of the Holy Virgin. (Those who are in orders say the Main Office at the same time we say the Little Office, in another room). After the Office, visit to the Blessed Sacrament (voluntary). We go back to our rooms until 6:00, when one goes to one of the lecture halls to say the rosary. After the rosary, a half-an-hour of spiritual reading, read aloud by one of ourselves; after the reading, some reflections from the first director, who is incidentally my confessor and, as well as that, a saint of the first class²¹. When the bell goes for supper, he stops, to our regret. At 7 we go on to the refectory, where, while we consume a fine main course of vegetables or herbs, and an enormous meat portion (the first portion is enough for me; I have no appetite left for meat), and dessert, a chapter is read from the New Testament and some other book. After supper, recreation until the bell goes for prayers. After prayers, a few minutes to say goodnight to the good Master. At 9:00 one must be in bed. If you find these details interesting, I have not wasted my time; in any case I have enjoyed having this chat with you, good mother as you are. With my affectionate greetings.

²¹ Antoine du Pouget Duclaux (1748-1827).

30. Eugene's Self-Portrait, for Mr. Duclaux²².

Character: lively and impetuous, but generous and just, often overly so; severity; hatred of jealousy; frankness. Childhood tendencies. a felling heart, adores his family, grateful. Has never had a real friend.

October 1808²³

You will get a better idea of my interior life from the few lines I am penning than from any amount of talk.

I am a lively and impetuous type of character. When I want something I want it very badly, I am impatient of the least hold-up and I find delays unbearable. Firm in my resolutions, I chafe against anything that gets in the way of carrying them out, and I would not let anything stand in my way to overcome even the most difficult obstacle. Obstinate in my desires and feelings, I rebel at the mere hint of opposition; if it persists and unless I am really sure that I am being opposed for a higher good, I become heated and then I find within myself new and hitherto unknown resources, I mean I acquire all of a sudden a remarkable fluency in the expression of my ideas which come all in a rush, although in my normal state I often have to dig for them, and express them but slowly. I experience the same facility when I am deeply moved by anything and really want others to share my feelings.

In sharp contrast to that, if instead of standing in my way someone gives way to me, I am completely disarmed and if I see that some embarrassment results for someone who held an unreasonable position against me, far from feeling triumphant, I do not rub it in by pressing home my arguments, I go out of my way rather to make excuses for him.

In either case, if I let slip some ungracious word, I am as upset as if I had committed a felony.

From this you can see that my character is generous, even just, but often *excessively so*, for I am naturally inclined to humble anyone who is

²² Draft ms.: Rome, Postulation Archives. DM IV-4. The first page of this notebook is omitted. On it Eugene copies out a text of Bourdalou (Retraite selon les exercices de saint Ignace) headed: "Why did God create me?"

²³ Eugene could write a lot of pages in a short space of time. This portrait must have been composed during the retreat of October 12-19 or a short time afterwards. Actually, in his Retreat Resolutions, he speaks of his character and says that he has made himself known to his Director as he really is. One is led to think by the opening line of the present text that he did this chiefly in writing.

too forward, and there is nothing I would not do to extol the merits of someone who is humble.

If I am in the wrong and someone tells me off with a superior or triumphalistic kind of attitude, I will not accept it, and come up with reasons, albeit specious, to cover up my mistake.

But if I am corrected by someone with an air and attitude of goodwill and friendship, I will not say a single word in my defence, and I will frankly acknowledge that I could have done better, been more thoughtful or expressed myself better.

By nature I am inclined to severity, quite determined never to allow myself the least self-indulgence, but at the same time strongly inclined not to suffer it in others too. I cannot accept the least compromise in anything to do with duty. Death, and I mean this literally, death should seem preferable to me to transgressing an important duty.

I hate jealousy and regard it as a vice unworthy of a generous heart. And so I am pleased when others show excellence, even outstanding excellence. If they shine in some field that is new to me, I try to push myself to imitate them. If I can see beforehand that it would be futile to make the effort, I am angry with myself for having wasted my time when I was young and because I am stupidly limited to certain kinds of knowledge only.

I have always been exceptionally frank, and this makes me steer clear of using any kind of flattering compliments that would in any way at all call my sincerity into question. Out in the world, people got used to accepting me as I am²⁴.

My experience has given me confidence that my judgment is rarely wide of the mark, and I have to be very careful not to speak my mind when there is no need²⁵.

²⁴ The following lines are crossed out:

"I must be on my guard against making rash judgments, for I have a strong propensity to pass judgment on all and sundry; led to do this by a certain talent I have had since I was a child to judge with ...

"I have never been able to be content with explaining people's actions on the basis of their intention, for it is my practice to pick up various small aspects of an action which escape the notice of most people, and which give me a well-nigh infallible clue to the person's intention. I am hardly ever mistaken in this. So I am not very trusting, and attach little weight to the protestations of friendship and esteem of three quarters of the people who would have me believe they are fond of me."

²⁵ "Rash" is crossed out.

I have never been able to content myself with explaining the actions of others on the basis of their apparent intention. Experience has convinced me that a sure way to make mistakes is to presume good intentions in the case of someone whose actions are bad; I prefer to suspend judgment, i.e., not to act on conclusions my mind wishes to draw from appearances. It has been noted from the time I was a child that I easily picked up various nuances that are usually overlooked by people without powers of observation, and it is with the help of these almost unconscious observations that I manage to avoid deception about character, tastes, dispositions, sincerity of the people I live with.

Nature is best observed during infancy when it is evolving artlessly. Thus the absolute, resolute and wilful calibre of my character is deducible from the following traits. When I wanted something, I did not beg or wheedle or cajole. I called for what I wanted in an imperious tone as if I had a right to it. If I was refused I would not cry. Crying was as rare with me as laughter, but I acted up, and tried to take by force what was not given me by consent.

When I was four one of my uncles brought me to the theatre. I was annoyed at the din they were making down below. I am told that standing on tip-toe to find out where the noise was coming from, I sharply addressed the whole audience down below with these words spoken in a tone that brought an explosion of laughter from all in the box: "tout are se descendi"! If I have to come down there!

Nothing was ever to be got out of me by chastisement, you had either to play up to my self-love or get through to my heart.

It is hard to understand, given the portrait of myself I have just painted, how sensitive a heart I have, overly so in fact. It would take too long to give you all the stories of my childhood traits I have had related to me and which are really rather surprising. It was quite normal for me to give away my breakfast even when I was hungry to satisfy the hunger of the poor, I used to bring firewood to people who complained of the cold and of not being able to afford to buy it, on one occasion I went as far as to give away the clothes off my back to clothe a poor person, and many, many other stories in the same vein.

When I had offended someone, even if it was a servant, I never had a moment's peace until I had been able to make reparation for what I had done, with some gifts, or gesture of friendship, or even a hug for the one who had reason to complain about me.

I have not changed over the years. I idolize my family. I would let myself be cut up into little pieces for some members of my family, and that stretches out to quite a long way for I would give my life without hesitation for my father, mother, grandmother, my sister and my father's two brothers. Generally speaking I love with passion everybody I believe loves me, but their's must be a passionate love too. So gratitude is the final constituent that goes to make up my heart's passion.

This feeling is so intense in me that it has never wavered. I have always longed for a friend, but I have never found one, at least one such as I am seeking; it is true that I am hard to please for as it is my nature to give generously I expect the same in return.

Even so I do not spurn some friendships of an ordinary, less exalted kind, although they are not really to my taste. In such cases I give in proportion to what I think I might experience in return. St. Augustine is one of the men (I am not thinking of him here in his capacity as a saint and doctor of the Church) whom I love best as he had a heart of the same calibre as my own, he understood what love means; when I read his *Confessions*, where he speaks of his friendship with Lipius, it was as if he were writing²⁶ in my name. I like St. Basil and St. Gregory very much. All those stories from history that tell of various similar examples of heroic friendships make my heart sing for joy; at that moment I experience a longing in my heart to meet such a treasure. In short, I need to love and as I know inside me what a truly perfect love would be like, I will not ever be satisfied with those ordinary friendships which are good enough for most people. I aim at a friendship which, to sum it all up in a word, would make but one being where there were two.

There is nothing carnal mixed up with these desires which issue from the noblest part of my heart. This is so true that I have always disdained any relationship with women, for those kinds of friendships between the different sexes find their origin more in the senses than in the heart. A person's rank in society does not enter as a factor at all into the feeling that brings me to love someone who of a truth loves me. The proof of this is the unbelievable affection I have for the servants who are truly fond of me; I hate being separated from them, it is a wrench for me to leave them, I take an interest in their welfare, and will not overlook anything to secure it, and I do not do this out of magnanimity or greatness of soul, motivations of that kind influence me only when it is a question of people who

²⁶ "of me" is crossed out.

are cold, but out of feeling, tenderness, really the only word for it is friendship. You must not think on that account that I do not feel called to do anything for anybody except those who love me. Quite the contrary, anyone who is suffering, or needs me, can count on my help.

Far from being in my eyes, as it is for many people, an irksome burden, gratitude is one of the things I like best, for it calls me to love the person to whom I am under an obligation. I am happy when I have incurred an obligation to someone who was moved by affection, and if this is an affection that singles me out and is partial towards me, there is nothing I would not do in gratitude for the friendship rather than for the service.

If someone's feelings towards me are only of the common or garden variety, when someone does something for me the same as they would do it for anybody, I can only respond as any gentleman would in these sort of circumstances, i.e., with an external show of gratitude, I mean one which does not come from the heart, a disposition to be of service, but in view of acquitting myself of my debt; while in the other case I take pleasure in remaining under obligation. So my appreciation for a trivial service that comes from the heart of someone who puts me under an obligation is infinitely greater than for an infinitely bigger one that is given only because it suits someone to oblige.

31. Fast days, communion days and "of perpetual memorial"²⁷.

[October-December 1808]²⁸

MY FAST DAYS, AS APPROVED BY MY DIRECTOR, WITH
SOME CHANGES.

²⁷ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives. DM IV-1.

²⁸ This list of fasting and communion days must have been drawn up in the first months of Eugene's life at the seminary. It was still, it seems, the fruit season: pears, grapes, etc. He had written in his retreat resolutions, before mentioning some mortifications: "This then is what I propose in the expectation that a longer stay in the seminary will show me some new way of mortifying myself."

His watchful eye and decisive spirit must have permitted him to "discover" and choose without delay these "new ways" of mortification.

It is easy to see however, by the colour of the ink and the quality of the pen, that certain additions were made during the seminary period and as he began his priestly life, e.g., November 3, anniversary of taking the habit; December 21, anniversary of the priesthood and, at the end, the list of his "personal feasts and days of perpetual memorial".

Page 4, entitled: "Chapters from the Scripture and the Imitation to be read by each one in private during the retreat", is omitted.

The date of this retreat is not indicated; the ink's colours and the tonality of the script of this page differ from those of the other three.

1. Every day appointed by the Church. On these days I must have just one meal and, unless it is really necessary, I will eat nothing at all in the evening. This must be understood as referring only to single days like those of quarter tenses or vigils, for during Lent the collation with bread will be permitted except on Good Friday.

2. I will fast every Friday throughout the year. For the present I am relaxing this fast, and permit myself a piece of bread and a pear, or an apple, or a small bunch of grapes, or some other fresh or dried fruit of that kind that is available, on the clear understanding that I must make do with only one of these things.

3. The vigil of certain devotional feasts, or certain special days, my fast will be as on Fridays as I have just described. These vigils and days are as follows:

in January: the 28th, vigil of St. Francis de Sales.

in February: the 1st, vigil of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin.

the 23rd, vigil of St. Matthew, Apostle.

in March: the 18th, vigil of St. Joseph, my patron (*unica commestio*).

the 24th, vigil of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin.

in April: the 30th, vigil of St. James and St. Philip, Apostles.

in May: the 25th, vigil of St. Philip Neri.

in June: the 10th, vigil of St. Barnabas, Apostle.

the 20th, vigil of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, my chosen patron (*unica commestio*).

the 23rd, vigil of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist.

the 28th, vigil of St. Peter and St. Paul, Apostles.

in July: the 1st, vigil of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin.

the 24th, vigil of St. James the Greater, Apostle.

in August: the 1st, my birthday, vigil of the anniversary of my baptism.

the 23rd, vigil of St. Bartholomew, Apostle.

in September: the 7th, vigil of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

the 28th, vigil of St. Michael Archangel.

in October: the 14th, vigil of St. Teresa.

the 27th, vigil of St. Simon and St. Jude, Apostles.

in November: the 3rd, vigil of St. Charles, my patron.

vigil of anniversary of my taking the ecclesiastical habit (collation with bread).

the 20th, vigil of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

in December: the 2nd, vigil of St. Francis Xavier.

the 7th, vigil of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

the 20th, vigil of St. Thomas, Apostle, anniversary of my priesthood (collation with bread).

26th, vigil of St. John the Apostle, Evangelist.

4. Every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday in Advent.

Nota. On devotional fast days I will not go to great lengths to observe abstinence at dinner, unless I am alone at home and perfectly free to do as I like.

5. When any of the feast days coincide, I will deprive myself of dessert at dinner.

SO FAR AS REGARDS COMMUNION DAYS they will depend completely on the will of my Director. Therefore the days I fix here will always be subject to his approval.

As well as the communions fixed by my Director on a regular basis for each week during the year, I will communicate every first Friday in the month, the days the Church celebrates the feasts of the Saints in honour of whom I have kept a vigil fast. Clearly this is without prejudice to major feast days, or even second class feasts which the Church celebrates. In a word, I must strive to reach as soon as possible the condition of being a daily communicant in accordance with the mind of the holy Church, and to dispose and prepare myself for the time, which I yearn for with so much ardour, when I will be able to celebrate the Mystery of the death of O.L. daily by offering the holy Sacrifice.

Nota

The three last days of Carnival and Ash Wednesday as well as the last day of the year will also be days of communion and fasting ... I will

receive the Body of J.C. firstly in reparation for all the outrages that the divine Majesty endures at the hands of men during these days of folly, days given over to the devil. Secondly, to supplicate the Lord to look upon me with eyes of compassion, to graciously accept the penance, all too little though it be, that I am going to do in union with the whole Church, and to pour out on me more and more the effects of his immense mercy. Thirdly, to thank God through his son J.C. for all the graces he has deigned to grant me in the course of the year, offering him this expiatory host to obtain the forgiveness of all my faults committed during this year and in the course of my whole existence, begging him not to withdraw his graces from me because of the bad use I have made of those has already so liberally granted.

MY PERSONAL FEASTS AND DAYS OF PERPETUAL MEMORIAL²⁹.

1789 August 1: my birthday and August 2, day of my baptism.

1808 November 4: anniversary of my taking the ecclesiastical habit.

1808 December 17: anniversary of my entry into the clerical state.

1809 May 27: anniversary of receiving the Minor Orders of Porter, Lector, Exorcist and Acolyte.

1809 December 23: anniversary of receiving the Sub-diaconate.

1810 June 16: anniversary of receiving the order of Diaconate.

1811 December 21: anniversary of receiving the Priesthood.

32. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix³⁰.

Prayers for Eugenie. Joy at her marriage and sadness at missing it. Spiritual advice for the future bride.

St. Sulpice Seminary, November 19, 1808

²⁹ We are in possession of another page entitled "Memorable days" (Postulation Archives. DM IV-7), where we find these further dates:

October 1 (1832): anniversary of my promotion to Icosia

October 14 (1832): anniversary of my consecration

October 23 (1837): anniversary of my nomination to Marseilles.

³⁰ Orig.: St-Martin-des-Pallières, chateau de Boisgelin. We omit the first paragraph in which Eugene declares that he has written to everyone in the family.

... So Tuesday³¹ is to be the day Eugenie will begin a new life, one that will be a source of blessings for her, if she is faithful to the graces God has given her from infancy and will go on giving her in abundance. Not only have I been praying, I am and will be praying, all of which may not contribute a great deal to her welfare, but still have had others pray that the Lord will uphold her and help her to walk in this new way. Several of my confreres have already offered their communions for this intention, and on Tuesday evening at quarter past eight in the evening prayers will be asked for her personally at community evening prayer. I assure you that we have among us a large number of powerful intercessors. And so, while you are busying yourselves with preparations for the wedding, etc., we shall be engaged at that moment in praying O.L.J.C. to deign to be present himself at that wedding and to shower it with all the graces his holy presence always brings. I am going to be there too in spirit, and I do not have to tell you that I will fully share your joy. That said, with regard to the distress I am feeling and will be feeling especially at that precise moment, through not being able to express my feelings face to face, etc., etc., that will be something between me and the good Lord; and when I consider that he left heaven to become man and die on the gallows, I will not feel any temptation to complain about the fact that he has seen fit to make me a sharer in a small way in the bitterness of his cross. Besides, I am not letting any of you off from filling me in with a few details of the events of that day.

To end up I urge Eugenie to stand firm over the matter of the play. Her sister-in-law is going to be suggesting it, her sister-in-law's friends are going to be using all their wiles to corrupt her over this. Without going into too many big arguments about it, I only hope she will take such a firm stand as to dispel right from the start all hope of changing her mind on the matter. This is more important than one may imagine. In Eugenie's position it would be a clear signal that the whole edifice of her piety is about to collapse in ruins. This would be a source of scandal for all persons of goodwill, and the subject of taunts from the wicked; in short, it would be a dreadful calamity. I recommend she read the book of Tobias where she will find excellent precepts for the living of a holy life within matrimony.

She ought to go often to receive the sacraments, it is a sure way of avoiding many marital faults. Lastly, she should certainly not see her state in life as a state of complete independence incompatible with a really

³¹ Tuesday, November 22.

deep piety, but on the contrary as a way in which she has to journey with ever greater zeal towards perfection as it is the way God has prescribed for her and by which she must come to him. But now I am calling a halt, as my time has run out. Dear mother, accept my congratulations. I shall write and convey them to Eugenie personally; I offer them too to Grandma, and I hold you all close to my heart, which is wholly yours, my dear and tender mothers, who on so many counts are deserving of all my love.

33. For Mama³².

Ceremony of renewal of clerical promises. His sister Eugenie's marriage.

Paris, November 21, 1808³³

... I have already sent a little greeting to grandma and promised a description of the ceremony which is to take place today, the day of Our Lady's Presentation in the Temple. The cardinal or, to speak more respectfully, His Imperial Highness and Eminence Cardinal Archbishop of Lyons³⁴, chaplain of France, etc., is going to come and perform the function and renew his clerical promise at the foot of the altar, along with several bishops, parish priests and other priests, and the whole community, that is to say all the ministers of the Lord, no matter what different order they belong to, will dedicate anew to the Lord their liberty and life, and reiterate the solemn promise to choose him as their lot and only good. Oh! how gladly I make the resolution, although I feel more than a little regret at not being able to present myself like them and promise out loud what secretly I shall be vowing a thousand and a thousand times; but next year my turn will come, and if I had known that this was going to take place, I would have pleaded to receive tonsure before this feastday³⁵. *Adiucias*³⁶.

³² Orig.: St-Martin-des-Pallières, chateau de Boisgelin.

³³ A long letter begun on November 10, continued on the 12, 21 and 25, concluded and sent on the 26th. Eugene says he has unpacked his trunk and speaks of his health, his need for money to buy a soutane, surplice, waistcoats, etc., and of Eugene's imminent marriage. We publish only this extract of November 21.

³⁴ Cardinal J. Fesch.

³⁵ Eugene took the soutane on November 4, feast of St. Charles, and received tonsure on December 17.

³⁶ A provençal word: Goodbye.

I am not forgetting what is to take place tomorrow at Aix³⁷, and I will be recalling it even more intensely at 9 o'clock, when I will have the happiness of possessing the Master of the world and Sovereign Dispenser of graces. And tomorrow again, I will receive communion expressly to draw down ever more and more on our dear Eugenie the blessings of the Lord, and that she may be ever faithful to the great graces God in his goodness has given her throughout her life.

34. To Mrs. de Mazenod, rue Papassaudy, isle 56, n.21, near place St-Honoré, in Aix³⁸.

Eugene will receive tonsure at quarter-tense in Advent. He asks for prayers.

From the seminary, December 3, 1808.

[p.3] While I'm not on the subject of church furnishings, I'm not wandering off my topic in letting you know that I have my dismissorials to receive holy Tonsure³⁹. It will be on the Saturday of quarter-tense this month that I will have the happiness of being admitted among the lower ranks of ministers of the sanctuary, but the lowest place in the Lord's house is better than the highest in the tabernacles of sinners. I do not have to remind you that, the quarter-tense fast being chiefly established to ask God to deign to give his Church ministers according to his heart, your penance and all our friends should be directed in a very special way to implore Almighty God's graces for me. On this occasion I am asking for the prayers of the family, of the Grey Sisters, the Carmelites, aunty's and her community's⁴⁰, those of all our holy fathers to put it briefly, and still

³⁷ Eugenie's marriage with Armand Natal, Marquess of Boisgelin, took place in Aix on November 21; at midnight, according to the custom prevailing in Provence at that time. Eugene is thus correct to speak of the 22nd. Cf. Mrs. de Mazenod's letter to Eugene on December 8. On October 24, she had written: "It must be admitted that the marriage arrangements have gone through very quickly. You were the first one to get the idea."

³⁸ Orig.: St-Martin-des-Pallières, chateau de Boisgelin. A letter begun on December 1 and ended on December 3. We omit the earlier pages in which Eugene expresses his thanks for details on Eugenie's marriage contact, declares his health to be good notwithstanding the Paris climate which is "the sum of all the worst elements nature has to offer," and speaks of the purchases he must make: a woollen blanket, surplice, etc.

³⁹ Mrs. de Mazenod learned from the Archbishop of the sending of the dismissorials. She was very surprised and hurt at seeing that Eugene was going to take this important step although he had made a promise that he would not commit himself before two years: "I am in a state of dreadful disquiet", she wrote on December 8. "As a gesture for my sake, do not enter into any commitments yet, and do nothing without letting me know first."

⁴⁰ Mrs. de Mazenod's cousin, the Ursuline sister. Cf. above, doc. 12, n.53.

others you may contact for me. You have no idea how powerful the prayers of the just are; I have obtained more graces from their intercession than from those of saints already enjoying the glory we all aspire to.

I still do not know what Bishop will perform the ceremony. I will pass on all that news to you.

I believe there will be no more than two deacons for promotion to the priesthood; there is good cause to bewail ...

35. To Mrs. de Boisgelin, nee Mazenod, at her residence, place Fontaine des Quatre Dauphins, in Aix, Department of Bouches du Rhône⁴¹.

Greetings on the occasion of Eugenie's marriage. Thanksgiving for benefits received and duty to remain faithful to the Lord. Avoid going to the theatre and dancing. Marriage and piety go well together. Receive communion often. Pray, read good books of piety, fly from occasions of sin. How to conduct herself in society: with great reserve. Request for prayers before tonsure.

From the Seminary of St. Sulpice, December 4, 1808, sent on 8th.

My dear Eugenie, it is hightime I conveyed my congratulations to you personally, and they will certainly be the most sincere of all those you receive; as you will not have any doubts on this score I will not waste time proving it, nor telling you how distressed I was a finding myself 150 leagues away when I longed to be in your arms; I confess that it was in this instance the greatest sacrifice I could make; you know my two reasons for taking this decision, and when I see how well the one turned out that was really only secondary although it did at the same time form part of my plans, it makes me very happy and gives me some consolation for having put your advantage ahead of my personal satisfaction⁴².

So now you are Mrs. de Boisgelin. It means that God has granted us what has been our deepest desire for so long. Called to the marital state, you wanted, and so did we all, to meet some genuine fellow whose character would give you an assurance of happiness; wealthy enough to shield

⁴¹ Orig.: St-Martin-des-Pallières, chateau de Boisgelin. We omit the end of the fourth page and the fifth page: Eugene complains that he is getting no news, he does not even know if the marriage took place, he gives his own news.

⁴² The two motives mentioned here seem to be, firstly: to respond to God's call; secondly, and secondary, to facilitate Eugenie's marriage by making it possible for Mrs. de Mazenod to increase the dowry.

you and your children from the painful anxiety so often felt by those who want to give a decent education to the fruits of their conjugal love but lack the wherewithal; you owe it perhaps to me that we decided we wanted someone of a social class and standing that could match our own; lastly, we wanted someone from the same town as ourselves. First and foremost and above all else he had to be a Christian, or at least not stand in the way of your continuing to be one. And now all of this has come to pass just as wanted it! I have reminded you of all this with the sole aim of having you acknowledge the wonderful workings of divine Providence, and make you aware of the motives you have for being grateful, which tie you by the sweetest bonds, those of the heart, to lifelong fidelity to him; the charge of ingratitude you would incur were you to sadden in the least way possible a God who has done so much for you, the mere thought of such black ingratitude will have you draw back with horror, whenever it is a question of weighing the world's ways and prejudices against God's immutable laws, that God who has shown himself so generous towards you.

You are perhaps surprised to see me broaching seriously a subject I could go on talking about for a week without exhausting it, but you are too familiar with my tenderness towards you to fail to grasp the motives that spur me and you are too intelligent not to understand its importance.

Keep in mind that on your conduct hangs God's glory and the honour of virtue. You are no child entering the marital state, some obscure person whose entry into the world's vanities and surrender to its deceptive and polluted pleasures would be a matter of no concern. You have entered marriage after spending twenty-two years in the practice of every virtue.

The eyes of all are on you to see if one is to attribute to constraint and hypocrisy the life of piety you led under the influence of a solidly Christian mother. You yourself will give the answer to this question. If you adopt an easy-going attitude and listen to the false and feeble arguments that people will not fail to put to you to prove that to be a Christian one does not have to do this, that or the other, or abstain from this or that; if you are foolishly affable and let yourself be persuaded that one must obey one's husband even when he demands what neither seems to be nor is conformable to conscience, and therefore for example it is alright to put in an appearance at the theatre so as not to cross him over something he thinks very important, if I say you fool yourself to such an extent as to give way on so important an issue, you are lost, you are convicted, it is the signal for hell's victory over grace, the very foundations of your virtue has been undermined, the house of your salvation that God's Mercy was pleased to construct little by little, and with ever new enrichments of

grace and holiness, stands in ruins; you might think it still stood although there is nothing left but a shell. The persons who contributed to your down fall would be the very ones who would loudly ridicule you, congratulating themselves like the fiends they are on having given the lie to a virtue that seemed unassailable. And even if you wanted afterwards to repent of this first transgression, your example would be worthless as people are wary of such see-saw virtue which they have every right to suspect of being fake.

It might seem perhaps to someone who did not have an accurate understanding of the Economy of Salvation that I am a little severe in thus making the salvation of an otherwise virtuous person depend on a visit to the theatre, or a waltz, or something else like that and equally foreign to the spirit of Christianity; but in your case you have too clear an idea of the sanctity of our vocation, the purity of the law of J.C., not to be aware that the cowardly abandonment of a single point of that heavenly teaching entails the consequence that the practice of the rest becomes futile, the renunciation of the reward promised to those alone who have fought the good fight. In short, it is to set oneself apart, turn one's back on J.C. and hold out the hand of friendship to Satan.

And so, dear Eugenie, do not let yourself be gulled under any pretext, no matter what it might be, for the first step you take towards the world will infallibly be followed by a notable diminution of grace, and the next result of both the one and the other of these evils will be an unhappy fall that would drag you down to the level, and even lower, of the generality of worldly people. And should you be found in the company of this horrid brood, who can tell whether God, justly angered that in contempt of his graces you have blasphemed his name, who can tell, I shudder to put this into words, if he would not condemn you to come to the same ending as the one to which, to judge by appearances, they are destined for.

Heart of mine, you understand very well that in imagining such things, I am far from supposing that they will happen; I have every expectation of seeing you resist courageously all the world's allures, honouring the virtue of which you have always made profession and setting an example of Christian perfection in the midst of the host of the enemy of J.C. To live in this perfection, you will have several things to observe: as your brother and a cleric I have a two-fold title to spell them out for you. I have not the slightest doubt that you are disposed to follow them exactly, and it is in their faithful practice that you will obtain each day new favours from God who will help you to overcome all the obstacles which will all too often be put in your way.

In the first place, you have to tell yourself a thousand times a day that your situation is quite special. The life you led before marriage is a powerful commitment that you made with God to be faithful to him all life long; far from being a reason for tempering in any way your first fervour, you must spur yourself to serve God with ever more zeal, if it is possible, as the dangers have grown and the obligations prodigiously multiplied. Marriage is holy, therefore it cannot be an obstacle to holiness, consequently any suggestion made to you on this ground as a reason for toning down your piety would be thoroughly false; besides, you have countless examples of persons who have successfully combined these two things, marriage and the exercise of the highest piety, and putting aside the saints and without delving into the past, I simply point to Mrs. de Sannes whom you can take as a model. By your change of state, of necessity you are thrust into the world and obliged to live in the midst of that corrupter, you therefore need to embrace the cross of J.C. even closer than you did in your hidden life, you must go and draw from the well even oftener the graces of the Saviour in the perennial well-spring of his adorable sacraments. I have often said to you and I repeat it with even more reason today, you do not go often enough to holy communion. St. Francis de Sales, that great teacher of the spiritual life, said openly that those who go but once a month to communion are doing the mere minimum of what must be done if they do not want to be counted among those who neglect and entertain no concern regarding their salvation. Avila, Rodriguez, Scupoli⁴³, the author of the *Imitation of J.C.*, all those in short who have been the best writers on this subject and in line with the Church's teaching, are all united in making perfection depend on a lively sacramental life, rather than making reception of the sacraments depend on perfection. I will say no more on this subject as you understand it well enough, and you know that it is only the Jansenists who have raised doubts about this truth. And so, I repeat, go to the sacraments, each communion will serve as your preparation for the next, and remember you will never learn to love J.C. worthily except in the sacrament of his love; emerging from this heavenly banquet one finds oneself ready to take on all hell's minions, and one no longer fears any danger, but it is the daily bread that one must renew very frequently in one's soul. Read and re-read St. Francis de Sales' "Introduction to the Devout Life"; you will find on this topic all you could desire, and besides excellent rules of conduct for all the circumstances of your life. I have always admired this book but my admiration

⁴³ Lorenzo Scupoli, a Theatine ascetic writer (1530-1610).

for it has grown even more since I have studied it in class in the seminary and heard one of our saintly Directors explain it. I will say no more on this subject, I will simply remind you that we live in bad times, it is clear God has given hell a long leash, and we can save ourselves from its deadly reach only by drawing ever closer to the cross of J.C., and uniting ourselves with him so often that we become one with him; it is by this means alone we will live from his Spirit, and we will see falling at our feet the arrows that the enemies of our salvation shoot at us.

I see that I have gone on too long on all these matters, but I can assure you that I have said only a fraction of all that is buzzing in my mind. The haste with which I am obliged to write forces me to let my pen flow or better to write as my heart dictates without paying too much attention to the order of my ideas, or the choice of suitable language, but between brother and sister one does not have to be too scrupulous. So I will sum up all I have said in a few words: constancy and perseverance in good resolutions made before marriage, resolute steadfastness in not yielding a jot when it is a question of something that concerns religion in even the smallest way, even only exteriorly, flight from all situations that might tend to weaken your fervour. Therefore my advice is that you never go dancing, and be assured that, in your position, it would be difficult not to consider as mortal sin your appearance at the theatre because of the dreadful scandal, etc. Constancy in prayer, and in reading good books of piety, among which you give preference to those which speak to the heart, re-reading amongst others St. Francis de Sales until you know it off by heart, that is to say throughout your life. Dear God, what a lot of things I would like to say on that subject. But I have said enough for you to understand that in these troubled times, more than ever Christians will only stand firm against the veiled persecution they are subjected to, for the most part without them being aware of it, if they identify themselves in some way with him who wished to hide himself beneath the species of bread only to show us that our souls have as much need of his precious body, so as not to die, as our bodies have of bread, and that just as it is necessary to have frequent resort to material bread to restore our machinery, in the same way it is necessary to repeat with great frequency participation in his most holy Sacrament to give strength to our souls which must face simultaneously so many enemies. If you adjudge that my letter is legible and makes sense, show it to your confessor, let him know your desire to act in conformity with it, (for J.C., jealous of our love, wants to be desired); if he opposes your wishes, your confessor I mean, I pity him and you too.

It has just occurred to me that the holy Council of Trent, which says somewhere that one must make use of this heavenly food often, that it wished all the faithful might communicate at every mass they hear, etc., in another place calls this divine sacrament a medicine that delivers us from venial sins and preserves us from mortal ones. So one does not have to be so perfect as certain people would have us think to approach it since the Council, which is infallible, teaches that venial sins are not an obstacle to the grace of the sacrament; I would add that a person would have to be stupid not to approach it often since it is a potent antidote (remedy) to preserve us from the only evil we have to fear in the world, I mean mortal sin.

But let us speak of other things, it takes nothing less than the occasion of a change of state of life and the sight of the numerous dangers that alarm my fraternal tenderness to excuse such a long moral harangue. I would really like to say something about how you should comport yourself in Society where from my place here, my poor child, you seem so out of place, but I have run out of space. As a general rule, be very reserved in your speech, say little until such time as you have acquired a little experience; the children of light are simple and bear no malice, but the children of darkness interpret everything according to the corruption of their hearts and the evil disposition of their minds. One has to be careful even how one smiles, for in the world it is only too often taken in a bad sense. There is no harm if you get the reputation of being serious and a bit taciturn, there is always time to reverse that, whereas it is far from easy to wipe out the bad impression a few careless words can leave and which can make you seem less bright than you are and even sometimes an imbecile; as a general rule do not venture anything you are not sure of, never admit in so many words that you are ignorant of this, that or the other, do not let on that you are just finding something out or learning it for the first time, get used to adopting a pose that will make people think you are well-up in what you do not know, when it comes to factual events, I mean, or any other thing touching on education, for with regard to what is evil, out of place, double-meanings, you must behave quite the opposite, for often you will have to feign not to understand what you really understand all too well, or to hold back your smiles, for sometimes it can be a sin to smile when it can be taken for complicity; change the subject, or if you cannot do that, show by the expression on your face that that kind of thing disgusts you. I cannot tell you how I suffer at not being able to be at your side as you take your first steps in the world, but such is God's will; I have written to Mrs. de Jouques to ask her to keep an eye on you; show reserve even with her, but be especially mistrustful of men, and especially

of Charles, father's friend's eldest⁴⁴. They will all come sniffing around you and follow at your heels until they have made you let drop some chance remark they can make use of to mock you with, so I repeat: great reserve. I am sorry I have to give you such a negative idea of the world, but I must tell you that you have to be wary of everyone you come into contact with, as if they were enemies; the best thing is to mingle as little as possible with people. We will have more opportunity to talk about all this in the next holidays; arrange for everyone to be at Aix, as I will not have enough time to go traipsing around the countryside ...

[p. 5] P.S.

I have just received the letter your husband has been so kind as to write. Please thank him for all the nice things he says, I wish I could thank him personally but I am swamped with work just now, as it is the eve of my retreat to prepare myself to receive in the least unworthy way possible holy Tonsure, the first step in a clerical career and one that it is important to make properly. I ask for your prayers and those of all who have the interests of the Church at heart; you all know how important it is in the present situation to draw down an abundance of graces on Ministers of religion ...

Now I'm off full speed to St. Sulpice, where we are celebrating with all solemnity the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin.

I am back from St. Sulpice, it is nearly 8:00 p.m., I am closing my letter as I take off my surplice to go for supper. Goodbye, I send my affectionate greetings, and I urge on you a devotion to the holy Virgin conceived without sin. Goodbye, goodbye, the vestibule is packed.

36. To Mrs. de Mazenod, nee Joannis, in Aix, Department of Bouches au Rhône⁴⁵.

Gratitude and reflections on the meaning of tonsure and the soutane.

December 18, 1808

My dear, good, excellent mother, the retreat we made before yesterday's ordination prevented me answering your letter dated the 3rd and posted on the 5th of this month. I hasten to take advantage of the first free moment I have to let you know what happiness it gave me ...

⁴⁴ Charles de Périer.

⁴⁵ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives. FB 1-7. We omit a section of the first page in which Eugene is happy to learn that a little trip has settled his mother's nerves, and page 4 where he talks about commissions and business matters.

I do not intend to treat you to a description of the ceremony of my admission into the sanctuary. It would take me too far afield, for a man is apt to talk a lot when he is on a subject he is full of. I will just tell you that the Lord is rich indeed and above all very generous, for indeed he amply repays us for the poor little deeds we offer him. What does the world amount to? Indeed, far from setting any value on the sacrifice we make of it to God, ought we not to count ourselves most blessed that he lets us strip ourselves of all that is contemptible, abject, perilous, to receive in exchange all that is greatest, most consoling, in a word his very self.

If men but knew the gift of God! But how could their minds, besotted in the mire of vice, rise to such lofty thoughts? So let us thank the Lord for deigning to glance mercifully at us, and try to deserve the continuation of his kindnesses by the humble conformity of our wills to his, and by the ardour with which we place ourselves more and more at his service and win over others to it too.

I hope you will be really at one with the whole Church in asking God to give his Church ministers apt for his service in these unhappy times. Judging by the consolations God was pleased to give me at that happy moment when I chose him as my inheritance, I am compelled to believe that the prayers of good Christians have been really fervent. How true is the saying that one moment passed with faith in the tabernacles of the Lord is better than years of false joy one tastes or thinks one tastes in the tabernacles of sinners. Poor worldlings, how they are to be pitied when they feast their eyes on such futile things as are all those which this deceiving world, aided by its prince the devil, offers them for their damnation. A single glance, fixed with courage on God and on all that God contains, would undeceive them to their great advantage. Unfortunately, they dare not raise their eyes to see the light that shines in every direction. How they are to be pitied and how much should not charity impel us to beseech God to deign to grant them a grace that perhaps they are less unworthy of than ourselves.

Stop, stop! there will be no end to it if I am to speak of the various feelings that awaken in me when I talk of these matters. I was right not to want to enter into this matter; you see where it has brought me, and although I write post-haste, I cannot hold back the clock and posting-time. I hate to see I still have some space unfilled; may I not use it to linger a moment longer with my good mother? See how three months have passed already, August has drawn that much nearer. What joy will be ours when we are in each others' arms! By the way, I must tell you something that will make you laugh. Just imagine, people have taken it into their heads to

compliment me on my soutane; people insist on saying it suits me; I will take some convincing. We joke about it sometimes with the Superior who laughingly told me what Mrs. Portalis never had the courage to say. I have come to be quite fond of this soutane, but this is not because it suits me, it is because I see it as the livery of the Church of J.C., and its colour reminds me that I must die to the world and to everything that lives according to the world's spirit; it is because it is a kind of shroud under which, if God so desires as I hope, are buried all my sins, and also for many other reasons too. For the rest, you will have the opportunity to judge for yourself if the opinion of the Parisian ladies is well-founded, as I intend to wear no other form of dress in our scarcely Christian city ...

37. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix⁴⁶.

Reflections on the Christmas mystery. Eugene's affection for his mother; their separation makes him suffer. Tonsure does not involve any commitment, but he remains determined to pursue his "holy career".

From the seminary St. Sulpice, December 25, [1808]

... Dearest Mother, do you really think that I was not beside you last night? How could I fail, meditating as I was on the holy Mother of God, who had just been filled with consolation on giving the world its Saviour, and at the same time had to experience so vividly the poverty, weakness and misery to which she saw her Divine Master reduced for love of men, how could these tender sentiments fail to draw me close to you? Indeed yes, darling mother, we spent the night together at the foot of the altar, which for me represented the crib in Bethlehem; together we offered our gifts to our Saviour and asked him to come to birth in our hearts and strengthen us in all that is weak, etc. You know my heart all too well, since it was formed from your own, so you will have a very clear understanding that it is as active and goes through the same feelings as your own. So we have to strive, each one of us alike, not to stifle it, which God does not want, but to hold it in check, so to speak. Scarcely a day has passed since I left you that I have not had to take myself to task for being too indulgent towards it; it is clear that it becomes a real temptation, since it afflicts and excessively saddens the soul that should enjoy unflinching

⁴⁶ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB 1-7. We omit the beginning and the end of this letter that was terminated on the 26th. Eugene says that he has written to his uncle and takes the opportunity to send the present letter; he talks about a number of religious ceremonies, the cold weather, some errands for Eugenie and thanks his mother for her lengthy letters.

peace. For the rest, it is an evil that I must bear with patiently, as it does not seem likely to ever go away. As well as that, I like it so much that I am really afraid that the doctor may not agree with the patient. So let us offer God in his goodness all these travails; and, as we consider that J.C. left the bosom of his Father to clothe himself in our flesh, that in a way he banished himself from heaven to live among us, let us go on patiently putting up with a separation that is costly to us both.

Let us often look for one another in the heart of our adorable Master, but above all share often in his adorable Body; it is the best way to bring us together, for, as we each of us find our common identity in J.C., we become but one thing with him, and through him and in him we become one thing with one another. Last night my thought was you would have wanted to honour the coming of this blessed Child, born for us, by laying him down in your heart. As I had the same happiness at practically the same time, I united myself to you with all my soul. Do you not wonder at the greatness of our soul? How many things it takes in at the same time! What an immense extent it covers in a flash! It is ravishing. I was adoring J.C. in my heart, I adored him in yours, I adored him on the altar and in the crib, I adored him in the heights of heaven. Worldlings, how you are to be pitied for closing your hearts to such sublime thoughts!

In an interval between exercises His Grace the Archbishop of Aix's nephew brought me your letter of December 11⁴⁷. You can imagine how happy it made me, in the light of what you have read above, that I had written just before. How grateful I am, good mother, for the trouble you've taken to write to me [p.3] at such length, but against that what a wonderful experience of joy a long letter brought me! How can I put it into words?

You do not make mention of my letters. Does this mean you have not received anything since the one the Archbishop delivered? That hurts me. I am also upset that you did not ask this Prelate what kind of dimissorial he sent me. One word would have sufficed to remove all your fears; you would have seen it was only a question of taking tonsure, and you are aware that the holy ceremony does not commit one to anything. I cannot tell you how much the misunderstanding hurts me, it has made you suffer a lot of annoyance all for nothing. In God's name, darling mother, try not to let yourself get upset so easily; it is bad for your nerves and keeps me constantly on edge. If you had stopped to think for just a moment, you

⁴⁷ Archbishop Champion de Cicé's nephew.

would have realized that I would have to go mad to commit myself in holy orders without telling you in advance. All that has happened then is that I have received tonsure, as I told you in several letters, and the most that will happen is that I will receive minor orders in the course of the year, which likewise leave me uncommitted. As to what you say about my father, I do not merely long to write to him about this matter but it will be with you that we will always talk these matters through. So you are going to see me in the coming holidays as free as when I left, but also determined to pursue this holy career that God's mercy calls me to ...

38. Thoughts on the feast of All Saints⁴⁸.

Reflections on the Church's catholicity, "a wonderful ... communion which turns the whole universe into one single, large family.

[1808-1812]⁴⁹

One of the thoughts that strikes me most about our holy religion is the thought of its catholicity; in my mind's eye I scan the whole wide world and everywhere it numbers men as brothers, it would not be easy to find any part of the inhabited globe where the fact of being a son of Jesus Christ and his Church would not assure the Christian of a welcome as an envoy of the Lord and not meet with an abundance of tender care flowing from the most ardent charity and poured forth in the name of him in whom all hearts who have seen the light are joined together. From every part of the world there rise up to heaven prayers and supplications which, being made in the name of all, take on the value for each one of the faithful of an inestimable treasure of graces and favours. The humble Christian, digging deep within the earth for precious metal, without ever satisfying the cruel and insatiable greed of his masters, owes perhaps to some savage but fervent inhabitant of Paraguay the strength and constancy he needs to endure joyfully the wearying works which ...

How wonderful this communion in which turns the whole universe into one single, large family whose interests are common, needs are similar, helps are mutual. How I love to dwell on this concert of ardent prayers directed up to heaven where dwells the Father, the bond, object and centre of ...

⁴⁸ Orig.: Postulation Archives, DM IV-5a, cahier n.2, p.17.

⁴⁹ An undated notebook containing 13 topics of "meditations and instructions". The content indicates that they are notes written at the seminary and taken, for the greater part, from spiritual works. Some of the notes, like the one given here, seem to be personal reflections. For a similar text, see doc. 7 above.

39. General counsels for achieving perfection⁵⁰.

Twelve counsels for achieving perfection.

[1809]

1. Place all one's trust in God, and never rely on one's own strength or be satisfied with good intentions.

2. Abstain from every deliberate fault however trivial it may seem.

3. Never be discouraged when one commits some fault, but humble oneself immediately, without fretting, and turn to God with an act of contrition, renewing one's good intention not to sin again; then recover one's peace of soul; and do likewise each time one falls, even if it be a hundred times a day.

Never reveal the temptations to which one is subjected to those who have not made much progress in perfection.

4. Keep custody of the heart so as to have no disordered affection for one's neighbour, one's goods, life's pleasures, etc. Avoid all familiarity with persons of the opposite sex, however pious they may be.

But above all one must renounce one's own will and the good opinion one is tempted to have of oneself, one must even be prepared to refrain from seeking one's own will in spiritual things like prayer, holy communion and mortification, and to submit oneself in that, as in all the rest, to obedience. In a word, one must expel from one's heart anything that is not in accord with God's good pleasure, anything that does not come from God.

5. Rejoice interiorly when one perceives that one is despised, mocked, looked upon even as the dregs of humanity. Oh! how well a soul prays that delights in being despised by man! This virtue is especially necessary in communities; one must furthermore nourish in one's heart the tenderest affection for one's enemies and persecutors, firmly resolved

(50). Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, DM IV-7. Many of Eugene's reading notes or personal reflections are undated, like the ones here. On January 6, 1810, he wrote his mother: "Try to read, once a week, these little spiritual counsels ..." Does this refer to the following text? If so it was written during 1809. Is it an extract from some book or his own work? Whatever the answer to this question, it contains ideas he often expressed in his seminary days: the desire for perfection, the seriousness of sin, the love of God, the importance of prayer, the Saviour's blood, the practice of the presence of God by ejaculatory prayers (he often speaks of this to his sister), etc.

to serve them and even to show them marks of our esteem by honouring them, etc.; one must at least pray a lot for them and wish them every kind of blessing in imitation of the saints who returned good for evil in this way.

6. Continually elicit within oneself the most lively desires of loving God and pleasing him. Without this desire the soul cannot make progress in the ways of perfection, and God will refuse those special graces he gives only to those who sigh after his love.

Along with this sincere and heart-felt desire there must ever be joined a firm determination always to do all that depends upon ourselves to please God. "The Devil fears nothing so much," says St. Teresa, "as mag-nanimous hearts."

One must also hold prayer in high esteem, it is the furnace to which one comes to draw fire from the divine love. The saints, because they loved God alone, also loved prayer above all else. One must further have an ardent desire for heaven as it is there alone one loves God without limit and measure, that is why God wants us to yearn with all the ardour we are capable of for this eternal Kingdom that O.L.J.C. acquired for us with his blood.

7. To conform oneself in everything and without reserve to God's will principally in the things that are contrary to our taste, and offer this submission several times a day to the Lord. St. Teresa did not fail to do this (fifty times a day)⁵¹.

8. Obey with the most scrupulous exactitude the commands of our superiors and our Spiritual Father. "Obedience is the queen of virtues," says the Ven. Father Caraffa, and St. Teresa said "that of souls who set themselves to love him God asks nothing further than obedience." Perfect obedience consists in doing what is prescribed for us without delay, with fidelity, joyfully, no questions asked, never asking for reasons or motives, so long only as we are not certain that the thing commanded is a sin. Such is the opinion of St. Bernard, St. Francis de Sales, St. Ignatius Loyola, and all Fathers of the spiritual life. In doubtful cases choose what one presumes obedience to prescribe; and when one cannot presume what obedience prescribes, choose what goes more against our tastes and inclinations. It is in this that the *vince te ipsum* consists that was so often inculcated and recommended by St. Francis Xavier and St. Ignatius.

⁵¹ Ms. has "fifty" written over "five hundred".

9. Have God's presence always before one's eyes. A person who really loves never forgets the loved object. To keep this divine presence in mind it is good to keep about one's person, or have in one's room, something suitable to remind us of it, or again to think of it when the clock strikes, etc. The best way is often to repeat during the course of the day acts of love of God, and acts of petition to obtain this divine love, for example: "My God and my all, I love you with all my heart — I give myself to you — Do with me as you will — I desire nothing but you alone, My God — Give me your love and it is enough." But one must produce these acts without straining and without aspiring to sensible consolations, for absolutely no other reason than to please God by saying them.

10. Direct one's intention towards pleasing God in each of one's daily actions, be they spiritual or bodily, saying: "Lord, I am doing such-and-such a thing just to please you." There you have the secret that transforms even the most ordinary and trifling of our actions into very meritorious works.

11. Make a spiritual retreat each year of eight to ten days, in total solitude and isolation from the world, devoting oneself exclusively to the exercises of the retreat, abstaining from any conversation and affairs that might distract and turn one from God with whom alone one must dialogue in this time set aside for recollection.

Likewise each month choose a day for recollection and retreat.

In a spirit of devotion, observe the novenas of Christmas, Pentecost, the seven principal feasts of the B.V.M., St. Joseph, one's Guardian Angel and one's saintly Patron.

During these novenas one may approach the holy Table each day, praying for one hour or at least for a half-hour more than usual. One may recite some vocal prayers, but they need not be very many; it is infinitely more valuable to make a set number of acts of love or the like.

12. Have a special devotion to St. Joseph, one's Guardian Angel, one's saintly Patron, but especially for St. Michael, patron and universal protector of all the faithful. But devotion to the Blessed Virgin must excel all others; for the glorious Mother of God is called by the Church: our life and our hope. It is morally impossible for a soul to make any progress in the ways of perfection if it lacks this tender and sincere devotion to the most holy Mother of God.

40. Eugene to his mother, in Aix⁵².

New Year greetings. How to say the office. Eugene goes about in the centre of Paris in his soutane regardless of human respect: laughter and jeers from the local riff-raff.

From the Seminary, January 4, 1809

... Before I go any further, dear, excellent mother mine, let me give you a most affectionate hug. This is my first letter to you this year. May it be a happy one for us both. I include myself as I am well aware that my happiness is always entwined with yours, as yours is wholly entwined with mine. But is there something you can do for my sake? Yes there is: do not go getting yourself all upset, look after yourself as befits our most valuable member, I mean of the family, for you know that we are totally united; that is why the far-away one suffers such a lot from the others being absent. So look after yourself properly, and do not go gadding about in the bad weather. Light a huge fire in your icebox of a bedroom. When you are saying your office, say it sitting down by the fire. You know how you hate standing up straight, and you know too quite well that posture, provided it is not immodest, does no damage to the interior respect called for when one addresses one's prayers to God. Furthermore the Church sets you an example when she provides in her liturgy that one should be seated for the recitation of the psalms and lessons; I think the Church's way of doing things is much to be preferred to individualistic ways, especially when the latter are certainly going to cause one problems ...

5 p.m.

[p.2] Today was a hike day. I had permission not to go, and I made use of the time to finish off a lot of matters. As the weather was not too bad, I was quite happy to run all my errands on foot, taking care however to tuck in my soutane half-way up my legs. I left the seminary at one o'clock ...

[p.3] But first my itinerary. From Mrs Duclos' I went down to Rue des Sts. Pères, where the cabriolets usually stand. My intention was to

⁵² Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB 1-7. We omit a large part of this letter in which Eugene describes various excursions, mostly on his mother's errands.

take one as far as the banker's, Mr. Suchet's agent, who lives in Rue de Choiseuil which is just a stone's throw from the Montmartre boulevards. It was not so much to save my legs as ... from a certain reluctance we have to cross the centre of Paris, the veritable Babylon.

Not having found a cabriolet, I was not bothered and to steer clear of the approaches to the Palais Royal I crossed the Tuileries like a man under the whip. From there I stumbled upon Rue St. Honoré, from there I do not know how at all I managed to get to Mr. Dupasquier's house in Rue de Choiseuil, where he paid me out 400 francs that I put in my pocket. Then, conscious of carrying all this money I bravely skirted the boulevards, saying the *Miserere* over and over, as is our praiseworthy custom when we are crossing the most scandalous sections of Paris, which earned me the bowed heads of two or three devout women, who perhaps imagined I was carrying the Blessed Sacrament. These attitudes of respect counterbalanced the mocking laughter of the riff-raff of both sexes who encountered me on their way. This type of laughter is less amusing than the insults they hurl at us usually at the top of their voices. For example, the day before yesterday in the Rue de Grenelle someone shouted repeatedly after me: "lazybones, lazybones"; a fit of laughter seized me and it was all I could do to keep it in. Another time it was "rolling black stone": that was the stone masons. Another time: "O, sorry breed of men", or "Crow", and who knows what else? To tell the truth, they give us a laugh and as for myself I am very annoyed I see these insults in this way as I cannot in all conscience offer them up to God. Today then there were no remarks. (I forgot to mention that sometimes I get compliments on my appearance, as they cry out at the top of their voices: "What a shame!" etc.). To cut a long story short, I eventually reached Mrs. Simeon's, where I found the Portalis ladies ... Finally, after two more stops, as night began to fall, without further ado I took out my rosary and got down to saying it, as on hike days we do not say it in the seminary, as the community recites it in groups of three or four on the way back from the country. Although it was beginning to get dark, people could see enough to perceive what I was doing. I rather think this did not do any harm, and in a city where vice reigns so audaciously the least the servants of J.C. can do is to make a public profession of the trust they have in the powerful intercession of the most holy Virgin ...

41. For darling grandma⁵³.

New Year's greetings. Eugene has a heart that is "perhaps over-sensitive" and is the source of "disquiet", "worries" and "anxieties".

January 12, 1809

I will write a little letter too for dear, darling mamma, and try to forget for a moment that I have been without news of the family now for a month, and not put on too sad a face with my New Year's greetings. What a multitude of things are comprised in this New Year's greeting! Dear, darling granny divines them all in her heart; a hint is enough for understanding hearts.

Tender mother, allow me at least now I am far away to tell you that I love you more than myself — more than ten thousand myselfs, as I would lay down my life for you ten thousand times. The consolation I feel in expressing my tender feelings unburdens me to some extent of all the disquiets that have their source in an over-sensitive heart. Even so, nothing would induce me to exchange it for the stoic fortitude the vast majority profess who claim to be above certain delicate and beautiful feelings that their hearts are actually incapable of feeling. You could cut off my arms and legs and not get a single tear out of me, but just to think of my loved ones can bring them forth in abundance. But what inexpressible happiness there is too in feeling oneself repaid in the same coin, in being able to count on people for whom one would sacrifice oneself. Far from being dissatisfied with my lot, I often thank God that he has enabled me to love as I do, all the more as it does not seem that he has given this gift to many. It is common enough to find a mother and grandmother who passionately love their children or infants, but one does not often come across instances of these latter reciprocating this love to the same extent. Most people open themselves to love as long as it is to their advantage, but that is as far as it goes; or if they repay some act of friendship they do so in a really cold and icy way; even so, those who are not made like me may have less to suffer in the way of worries and anxieties and it may turn out that they have earned less time in purgatory.

I said when I urged mamma to take care of her health that these were the New Year's gifts I was giving her. As I urge you to do the same, may I say the New Year's gifts I want from you are that you will stop seeing yourself always as a nobody, but take care of yourself and surrender your-

⁵³ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB 1-6.

self to the care your children want to show you. For heaven's sake, do show a little docility in this matter.

It only remains for me to seal my bundle of letters so as not to miss the opportunity of sending them by Mr. d'Oppède who is on the point of leaving. This is one letter at least that will reach you fairly quickly, even if it is a lucky exception. If only my letters could get to you as fast and often as my thoughts are with you, you would be spending all your time reading them. As it is, I hope you will go on giving me your love; besides, you will only be paying what you owe.

Goodbye, goodbye, darling mamma; I hold you close and give you a thousand hugs, and am always your Eugene.

P.S. The postman has been; again no letters for me. It really is cruel. Today is the 12th, and mamma's last letter was dated December 11.

42. To Mrs. de Mazenod, rue Papassaudy, isle 56, n.21, near Place St. Honoré, in Aix⁵⁴.

He asks her to write every fortnight. Eugene's anxieties and fears when he gets no news of the family.

From St. Sulpice Seminary, January 18, [1809]⁵⁵

What on earth has happened? Dear mamma, how can you possibly let a whole month go by without writing me? What on earth has happened? I cannot conceal the dreadful state I am in. Here I am with several days gone by already when I was counting on getting a letter from you, but always in vain. Unless there has been an accident, I cannot imagine you would leave me for such a long time with no news about the only thing that interests me in this world: my dear family's health.

I am flabbergasted that there is no one writing to me. Timewise, it is easier for me to read fifty letters than to write a single one. It's not as if I do not make the effort and I hope that up to now you have not found me neglectful in using every means to hand to get my news through to you ... A month without getting any news, this is more than I can endure. So I am not waiting for Mr. d'Oppède's departure to make my complaints, if complaints are due, for who knows what may have happened?

⁵⁴ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB 1-7. We give practically the whole of this short letter in which Eugene's attachment to his family, one of the main sources of his suffering at the outset of his stay in Paris, is very evident.

⁵⁵ Ms.: 1808.

I do not insist that it should always be you who does the writing, if you would find that too tiring; but get someone else to write then and just add a few lines in your own handwriting. In other words, find some way to make sure, without distress to yourself, that I am not left a fortnight without a letter from you. You are not unaware that your letters are life to me, I become sad and depressed when I am without them, as my mind invents a thousand awful and oppressive phantoms. In God's name, do not let it ever happen again that you forget me like this.

With all my love, my tender and all too dear mother. Please give my affectionate greetings to Grandma and Eugenie, but what a lot of anxiety and fear there is too in this sweet outpouring of my soul!

43. Eugene to his mother, in Aix⁵⁶.

His joy on learning that Eugenie retains her fervour; she is held up as an example in the catechism class on perseverance. Advice for his cousin Emile Dedons.

From the seminary St. Sulpice, January 21 [1809]

... Eugenie's little effort at a letter gave me a very great deal of pleasure. The sentiments she expresses came as no surprise; she is passed the age, and has received too many graces from O.L., to let herself be dazzled by the world's wretched passing show. Even with a little reflection, the wretched state of the greater number of the worldlings she sees around her will help her all the more to appreciate the wisdom of the part she has chosen. Far from being drawn into lukewarmness by others' example, she must spur herself on to ever greater fervour. Let her go into the world, she is cut out for that, but once there let her be Christian and very much the Christian. People must realize that the reason she does not go to the theatre is that she is a disciple of J.C., that she does not go dancing because she is a disciple of J.C., that she does not stuff herself at suppers given on days of abstinence because she is a disciple of J.C. In other words, she must give witness that O.L. has his chosen ones in all classes of society, who are faithful to him in all life's circumstances. Above all I pray she will not give up the practice of frequenting the sacraments; that is where she will find strength. The early Christians were exposed to a form of persecution less dangerous than today's world offers to those who, finding

⁵⁶ Orig.: St. Martin des Pallières, château de Boisgelin. We omit several paragraphs from this letter. Eugene is happy at having got some news and tells his mother he does not use the recreation periods for writing; he expresses his gratitude for gifts of provisions for the seminary bursar and talks of his health, linen, etc.

themselves in its midst, want even so to serve the Master who redeemed us. We must therefore make use of the same remedy, all the more so as there are no others.

Our fervent friends in the seminary, to whom I read out the bits that are of interest to all who are lovers of God's glory, will be offering many prayers for that dear child's perseverance in the path of goodness. I will even disclose in confidence that one of our catechists intends to cite this example of a young person who resists the pursuits and bad examples of the world, despite having every opportunity to give herself freely to the dissipation normally felt to be permissible to people who are not monks or religious, to his little flock, soon I think to be mine as well. And so our dear Eugenie's example is going to help not only those in her own home town who are worthy of experiencing her reserve at its proper value but will also do a power of good in the souls of four or five hundred young girls who take part in the second catechism of St. Sulpice. Judge for yourself the graces this will win her. Forward, "fervour and perseverance", this is the knightly motto I bestow on her ...

... It strikes me that Sir Emile is having a good time. He had better watch out! If playgoing will bring harm to his soul, dancing will harm both his soul and his body. My advice to him is to show moderation in all these draining and dissipating activities. If he loses his way, who will there be to steer him back? I really do not know. In the meantime, keep an eye on him without his knowing it; it would be a bad habit for him to pick up, one that it would be difficult to shake him out of. So, without setting out to preach him a sermon, which is scarcely to his liking, do not be afraid to do some straight talking ...

44. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix⁵⁷.

Eugene is appointed catechist to a group of boys. His joy on learning of Eugenie's perseverance in a life of piety. Visit from Magalon junior. Cardinal Fesch is appointed Archbishop of Paris.

From the Seminary St. Sulpice, February 4, 1809

... I will not be able to write to you as much as I would like, as tomorrow I take on a new job that will involve a lot of work. At St. Sulpice we have six or seven catechism classes, which are going wonder-

⁵⁷ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. We omit some paragraphs from this letter in which Eugene speaks of various errands and business matters.

fully well and are really admirable in the way they are set up. it is not acceptable, in these catechism classes, to teach the children just by rote; assiduous efforts are made through instructions to inculcate in them the spirit of religion, and care is taken in these instructions to prepare the children to be active participants. This is an excellent method, in the first place for the children who are obliged to reflect and discover proper answers out of their own heads, to say nothing of the other benefits they get from it. It is also very useful for the catechists as it prepares them to give homely instructions on all aspects of religion. The whole operation is so satisfactory that many grown-up people come to take part, not just out of curiosity but to derive some benefit from it themselves. Just one of these catechism classes was not going to the satisfaction of the catechetics director, not so much perhaps because of any fault on the part of the people in charge as because of the bad dispositions of the members of the class; these are the poorest in the parish, children of tavern-keepers, in a word a vermin-ridden lot. It has been decided that perhaps I might breathe some life into this ailing body, and so I have been chosen to be its head. Rumour has it that the intention is for me to go on then to another, but I am not concerned with that, and I am very happy to find myself in the middle of these poor verminous lads, whom I shall try to win over to ourselves. Tomorrow we are going to meet for the first time and God willing we will be good friends. Talking of this, I must ask Emile to take on a big job for me; namely, to copy out from the Aix catechism the headings of the stories given at the end of each chapter; he is to write them out on a sheet of paper, writing very small, as follows, for example: Baptism: story of ..., Pride: story of ..., and so on for all the chapters, beginning with the first. He should let me have this a little at a time, as he progresses. If I see it is not going to be much of a help to me, I will call a halt; but I think the listing of these stories is going to be most useful for locating them easily and applying them, as I want to pepper my instructions with them to make them more amusing. Children have to be attracted in all sorts of ways. I will have in my catechism class a large number of big boys who have not yet made their first communion. Taking them on does not constitute a problem for me, as with God's help we will not do such a bad job. Clearly they have to make their first communion, but it is still more necessary that they do it well. Please tell my uncle that I will perhaps be obliged to ask him to sponsor me and help me put up some small incentives, such as good books of piety that are normally given to those who show the best behaviour, are the most fervent, most punctual, etc. As for the rest, to calm any fears you may have, if you think that I have to look after this bunch of brats all alone, I can tell you that I am going to have at least two

helpers, and perhaps three. I am all the more glad to be involved in this type of work, which has enjoyed every kind of success in the period of more than 150 years it has been in operation, as I want to familiarize myself thoroughly with its modes of procedure, statutes, etc., so as to set it up at Aix where the catechetical classes are going about as badly as they could and in consequence of this failure one does not see a single child persevering after first communion, while here it is quite the opposite.

What you tell me about Eugenie's conduct delights me; I expected nothing less of her piety. She is taking the right road for a lifetime of happiness. I say it again, it does no harm for people to know that it is on account of her religious principles that she does not go to the theatre and out dancing. Those so-called devout ladies who express surprise at this are deceiving themselves; inside they are raging because Eugenie with her wise, Christian and generous conduct is exposing both their own slackness and that of their daughters. The question has to be put to these silly women, whether they would have the gall to invite J.C. or the Blessed Virgin to a dance; for what J.C. and the Blessed Virgin would not do, we cannot do either. O.L. is the model for every age and every state of life; he has sanctified by his example all the different situations the Christian can lawfully put himself in. It would take too long to go into particulars, but it is enough to reflect for a moment on his life and precepts to penetrate the question more deeply than I could ever express it. People who deceive themselves to the point of abandoning all constraints had better watch out; that is the way to lose one's soul; that is the meaning of a passage in the prophet Ezekiel that could well be applied to these "up-daters" of the Gospel.

I have seen Magalon junior a number of times⁵⁸. It goes without saying that he is the one of all our compatriots I most like to see. I find his views very agreeable and I rather regret to hear him say the same thing about me, in the sense that it took him so long to come and make my acquaintance. He has come three times in four days, and I would not let anything interfere with our chats, as we talk only about God and I hope this will not be without fruit for him. Eugenie can tell Mrs. de Magalon and Amelie I am very fond of him because of the good qualities I see in him; a mother always likes to hear that ...

⁵⁸ Paul de Magalon (1784-1859) who will be a member of the Aix Youth Congregation in 1815, a postulant with the Missionaries of Provence in 1816, and later a hospital Brother of St. John of God. Cf. P. Pralon, *Paul de Magalon, capitaine et hospitalier*, Lille, 1893, p.57ff.

... The Emperor has just named Cardinal Fesch to be Archbishop of Paris. You will have learnt of this before you get my letter; but you will not hear people saying that every good catholic is delighted by this as His Eminence is very attached to the Pope and to religion.

45. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix⁵⁹.

Eugene is preparing 50 children for their first communion. He takes the initiative in forming a group of seminarians to keep the fast during Carnival time. Sanctification of the days of Carnival. Mrs. de Mazenod should not overtax herself in keeping the fast. The provisions sent from Aix will go to pay Eugene's fees for the second semester at the seminary. He will spend the holidays with the family.

From the Seminary St. Sulpice, February 13, 1809

... So here I am in charge of a First Communion Remedial Catechism Class. We have only about fifty, but they give us more problems than all the other 430 who make up the class of which ours is a section. I was detailed, yesterday, Carnival Sunday, to give an instruction on the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation. This instruction, that lasts about an hour, is simply a deepening of the catechism, but this deepening is quite a problem, as one has to get these abstract matters over to children and then engage them each in turn in dialogue. I find I get a lot myself out of these exercises. In the first place I get a much more precise and profound idea of the matters I have to deal with, I give them a good chew myself before passing them on to the children, I get used to public speaking, for 50 children, plus a score of curious onlookers, some of them from the house, do constitute in all reality a public; and then too I get a real insight into the method of conducting catechism classes which has enjoyed a lot of success at St. Sulpice for more than a century, with a view, God willing, to setting it up at Aix where they really have no idea what catechism is. Next Sunday one of my colleagues will give the instruction, my job will be to given an explanation of the Gospel lasting only five or six minutes. It is a short talk that our people usually write out and learn by heart; I will go along with this practice the first few times, but later on I intend to stand less on ceremony with our children.

Can you guess how we spent Thursday, Monday and Shrove Tuesday at the seminary? To start with, we did not go out except for Church, and

⁵⁹ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. We omit a part of this letter where Eugene speaks about Mrs. de Mazenod's problems at St. Laurent and about a parcel that has gone astray.

that went for everyone; but, as well as that, about a dozen of us got together and, in keeping with the mind of the Church and in order to make reparation, in so far as we can, for all the excesses contrary to the holy virtue of temperance, and others besides, during these days of lunacy, we resolved to keep the fast these three days and offer a little expiatory prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. It was God in his goodness who gave me this idea and it worked out as I had hoped. No one in the seminary knows anything about the little act of mortification our little society took on itself, and even the members of the society do not know that it was I who took the initiative. I notice that a lot of good things never get done for want of someone to make the suggestion; a lot of Christians have it in them to do all kinds of good works that they will never perhaps carry out unless they meet up with someone, who is often less perfect than they are themselves, but who invites them to get to work, with no more trouble to himself than that of making the proposal.

What happiness it is to be on retreat during these days of dissipation; what a consolation to be able to spend some time at the feet of Jesus Christ, to make honourable amends for all the insults he gets from all parts of the world. Today is Monday, my day for making adoration in the community's name from 4:30 to 5:00. I have just this minute come away from being at the feet of our good Master. What an effort it cost me to tear myself away from his presence. I felt that this tender friend must experience some satisfaction when at the very time most of his children, ingrates all, for whom he shed all his blood, are giving him offence and cruelly insulting him, I felt, I say, that the adorable Saviour must experience some satisfaction on seeing at his feet a miserable sinner, repenting of his sins, groaning over his ill deeds, putting them behind him in the sorrow of his soul, putting his trust in his mercy to the point of daring to offer himself as a victim to Jesus Christ and in union with Him to his heavenly Father, not only in expiation for his own faults but also for those blind unfortunates who are even so his brothers. Its getting too dark for me to see what I'm writing. And the bell is summoning us too to go to St. Sulpice for Benediction. I have the honour of carrying the cross in the procession, something I often do; on these occasions I assist at the altar dressed in a cope.

14th

I cannot get over how few people come to church, in relation to the size of the population in this enormous city, it amounts to practically nobody. It is true that the few Christians one does find are there out of devotion. Today is the last day of Carnival and its madness. Would to

God it were the end too of all sinning! But in the unhappy age we live in any time is a good time to offend God. So Lent will not put a stop to the flood of iniquities that is inundating the world. It is up to us to try to appease God's anger, but let me point out dear mother there is more than one way of fulfilling this duty. So do not be too hard on yourself, I implore you, in keeping the fast, which, if entered into over-strictly by someone in your situation, could be very damaging. So do not scruple to have a drink between meals; meagre fare has a way of making that stomach cry out for this relief. Why don't you, in the evening, allow yourself some boiled prunes, they are very good for the chest. A mother with family, and such a mother as you, is acting meritoriously when she takes care of her health for in that way she provides at the same time for the welfare of a lot of other people too.

We are very conscious of the good care you have taken of us and of all the trouble you went to over our consignment. You have earned your reward from God, for it is a work of charity to provide for the needs of God's servants, and I can assure you there are a lot of very fervent ones in our community. However, I should be upset if this put you to too much trouble. As to the money, I will leave most of it in the hands of the Bursar to pay for my second semester. Here I am at the seminary five months already which means that in another five months I will be giving you a big hug. Of all my expenditures the one I will mind least is the cost of my journey. I very much fear I will have to pay in purgatory for the way I love my family. I do not want to dwell too much on that subject ...

Magalon comes to see me almost every day and I do not hesitate to give up my recreations for him as good comes from our conversations. The first we had together had a singular effect on him that I had neither foreseen nor desired, as enthusiasm is not something that appeals to me, even when its object is a good one, when it does not produce lasting fruits. Imagine, he got so worked up that he wrote immediately to tell his mother that, after along conversation he had with me, he foresaw too many dangers in taking up a career in the army (he had only just obtained a commission), that he felt powerful religious feelings re-awakening in his heart and a powerful desire to enter the clerical state. You can imagine how that letter would have gone down in the family, which is pinning great hopes on this young man's success as a soldier. You can understand they will be ready to crucify me. I had a chuckle over this, imagining the friends coming together to find a way to keep the young man away from a fanatic like me. In any case, they did not have to put themselves to the trouble. A single night was enough to pierce these fogs, and our young

hero reverted to a plan more suited to him, namely, to take the decision to serve God as a soldier. The happiness he had seen in me had for a moment tempted him and perhaps the lively way I expressed my vivid feelings swept him off his feet without my even trying. So his family will be wrong to imagine I tried to snatch him from them. The grace of vocation⁶⁰ to the clerical state is not given to everybody and that is something that should make those of us appreciate it all the more whom God's mercy calls to share his sufferings and the sublime ministry of the God-Man. I am telling you this as it is possible that the Magalons will speak to Eugenie about it and in a guileless way she might just let it drop that I had written that I was over-joyed at seeing a young man take the firm resolution to serve God courageously in the armed forces. On the other hand, perhaps it would be better not to say anything. They will believe what they want, and that will not affect me any more than the view that was entertained when it got about that I was at the seminary. When we are close to the sanctuary we acquire an amazing impassivity in the face of all these things. Let the world talk, let it frown, spread calumnies, this does not go below the surface and we will not swerve from our path on that account. As the world is the enemy of Jesus Christ, it has to hate us and we for our part rejoice at being hated for Jesus Christ ...

46. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix⁶¹.

Eugene will be going to Aix during the summer but he will not be ordained priest before then. He answers his mother's objections. The Mazenod name will die with him. Consolations Mrs. de Mazenod will experience when she assists at the Sacrifice offered by her son. Death of two priests in Aix. Eugenie must live in the world without developing a taste for dissipation. Eugene is coping well with the Lenten fast.

From the seminary St. Sulpice, February 28, 1809

When I left I promised I would do a year's novitiate. Take me at my word, and put aside any fears you may have on that score; however, in the course of this year, you really should be giving the matter some serious thought, if it is to be a joyful experience for you when the day arrives and I make my final commitment in the Lord's service. So let us lift up our

⁶⁰ From this point the text is written in the margin of the first three pages.

⁶¹ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. We omit a large part of this letter in which Eugene speaks of letters received and sent, of his expenses since he came to Paris and the worries raised by Mr. Serre in St. Laurent du Verdon. He has consulted a theologian about this.

hearts to God and consider if there be any happiness like that of sharing in the divine mission of the son of God. What truck then would you want me to have with this earth and all its vanities, that will vanish at the moment of death and leave us alone with our works? Haven't I already given too much of my time to this world, when I should rather have been at war with it, enemy as it is to Jesus Christ? And when this divine Master calls me to Him to serve his Church, at a time when she is abandoned by everyone, am I to resist his voice and pine away in an alien land? Believe me, my dear mother, the worry you give yourself over this is a veritable temptation of the devil. Be sure of this, I know in my heart that I am destined to do some good. The graces God gave me in the past, those he gives me each day, are my warrant for those yet greater ones he is keeping for when I shall be in the ministry. This being so, should one be surprised if the demon does everything in his power to put obstacles in the way of carrying out a project that must be harmful to him? But do we have to listen? I put that question to you. When all is said and done, we are upsetting ourselves in a struggle with phantoms of our own creation. As a cleric, will I not be, as I have remarked on other occasions, much more present with you than if I were married (married, yes indeed, that is a fine way to go to the devil nowadays). The affection one is obliged to have for a wife and children is so much taken from what I want to keep whole for you. I was going on to say some really beautiful things when the bell sounded to shut me up. I will not continue with that subject as after all a moment's reflection will bring to your mind everything I could say about it. I will allow myself just one more word, that is to remind you we are Christians, that the earth we are so attached to is nought but a place of passage and exile, that one would have to be out of one's senses to be attached to something that can be of no help to us for our celestial Fatherland; finally, and putting it all in a nutshell, we can have no other end than to do God's will. Now when this will is sufficiently clear to us, we must follow it and count ourselves very fortunate, even offering unceasing thanksgivings when he calls us to the greatest thing on earth and in heaven. If only we could always see things in their true light! Grasp with all your being the excellence of the dignity of the priest, dispenser of God's mysteries, mediator between God and man, etc. All the actions of his life, what he does with every minute of his day, brings him straight to God. But there I am going to stop or I will never end. As to the dangers that may be brought up as objections, I reply that there is nothing at all for the man to fear who knows his weakness, places all his trust in God and leans on him as he strides along the way he has laid out for him.

There are some people who cannot conceive how I could come to a decision to see my name come to an end with me in the obscurity of the sanctuary. My reaction today is one of pity, and I am ashamed that I lingered for so long over such a futile vanity. Now is the time to apply something I said when I was 14 years old and that you reminded me of one day. What family even of royal blood would not feel itself honoured to become extinct in the person of a priest, invested with all the powers of J.C., exercising on earth his royal priesthood, to be lifted up to heaven to a degree of glory and happiness in proportion to the excellence of the character with which his soul has been signed by God's mercy.

You do not take into consideration the consolation you will know when you assist at the Sacrifice offered through the ministry of your son. You will be besides yourself for joy, and I am quite sure tears will flow from your eyes, when you receive the precious body of J.C. from the hands of your son who ... will have consecrated it in your presence notwithstanding his unworthiness. Can we even imagine what it will be like for us on the day of my first Mass at which, I hope, the whole family will receive communion? Believe me, my dear mother, far from getting upset and allowing yourself to be the prey to imaginary fears, pray to God in his goodness with all your heart to cut short the time of trial and deign to admit me soon to the ranks of his ministers. It is not a problem for me to defer a little longer the commitment I shall make through those sweet ties that will bind me to J.C. for all eternity, first of all so as to have a space between the secular state and holy orders, and to test myself further and to satisfy you. Then once I am a sub-deacon, it is my hope in God that I will soon thereafter be a priest, with everything conspiring and carrying me forward to have myself dispensed from the interstices; but we can talk about all that in the holiday, and I will tell you again that the most I will then have is minor orders.

I was very sorry to hear of the deaths of good Father Philippe and Trophine. The former especially did a lot for our diocese. What a lucky man to die sword in hand! In all truth I find it hard to pray for him, I am so sure that soldiers of J.C. dying on the battlefield receive their reward without the least delay. As you see, the ranks are getting thinner every day, soon the Church will be at a loss to know to whom she might confide her children, and one would have to be slothful indeed not to burn with the desire to come to the aid of this good Mother in her well-nigh desperate plight. Does not the fact of feeling this desire vividly, deeply rooted in the heart, in these unhappy times when the faith produces but faded fruits, in itself offer a clear sign of the will of the sovereign mover of hearts? however, it is not for us to assert this.

It is no cause for alarm that Eugenie is going about a lot in the world and staying there for long periods. In the first months of marriage she could not oppose her husband's desires and run the risk of upsetting her sister-in-law. Next year, God willing, things will be different, she will have a thousand ways, not open to her today, to excuse herself and to do in that as in many other things what she wants. At the same time it will never be right for her to cut herself off from the world, I mean by the world the social circles where persons of her state of life meet together, provided she does not develop a taste for dissipation and carries and sustains herself there in her character as a Christian. My advice to her will always be to read every day a chapter of the *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francois de Sales, it is the best book she could read in her situation. Please remind her of this for me. If only every sentence of that masterpiece of devotional literature were inscribed in indelible characters on her memory; it is, in the estimation of all the greatest masters of the spiritual life, the most perfect Christian treatise after the Gospel.

I have seen Mrs. Pinczon. She lives with the Dames of St. Thomas, that is to say, just a few steps from here; it is scarcely farther away than our house is from the Enclos. She will be going back to Aix a little after Easter. I return Mr. Beylot⁶² the compliments he kindly sent me, or better, I send him others in exchange, and also to those few others who really concern themselves about me. I pray for those whose faith is not big enough to form a balanced judgment on the step I have taken which seemed to many to be taken in haste, as they were unaware how long the Lord has been inspiring me to take it; besides I wonder whether most of them know that there is a Lord at all! Do not be the least bit concerned about my Lent. Here I am with a large part done already and without my having noticed it. We get an extra course at dinner, so you see they are looking after us. Abstinence does not cause me any problems; we have fish quite often, and the bread we get for collation would equal two big quarteron loaves in Aix. You know my evening snack at home with you never amounted to very much, so you can easily see it is no hardship for me when I see a choice of a mere three desserts on our table. It seems vegetables do not form part of a collation in Paris; we are served first usually some cheese and, as well, sometimes either grapes or nuts, sometimes boiled prunes and apple or pear jam, or something like that. My confessor obliges me to eat at least one of these things with my bread. So, there you have more than enough to set your mind at rest ...

⁶² Canon J.J. Beylot.

47. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix⁶³.

Eugene has renounced the world and the goods of this world; but he does not want his mother to sell off her property, the Enclos, near Aix. He wants his uncle Roze-Joannis, to whom the family is very attached, to go on living at Aix. Eugene's affections bear the imprint of his character: strength and sensibility.

From the Seminary, March 6, 1809

... So I hasten to tell you that, when I went so far as to take the soutane, my intention was to die to the world and its absurd vanities; and since, by God's grace, I was finally enabled to assent to my name becoming extinct in the sanctuary, with all the more reason I have put aside various small attachments, even less sustainable than the former. And so I can assure you that I was attaching no more importance to St. Laurent than to any other property. If I seemed not to want you to sell off the Enclos, it was because as a hermitage it fitted in perfectly with my plans for when I shall be in the ministry; but so far as St. Laurent is concerned, I repeat you can sell it without the least fear of upsetting me.

... So what about this trip my uncle is planning to make to Paris? Does he intend to stay there permanently, or is he only thinking of a limited stay? What is the point of such a move? Only four days ago he wanted to buy a house in Aix, and now here he is abandoning that city only to throw himself into a Babylon from whence he would inevitably have to flee with all speed once he were there. How can people be so out of touch with what really suits their needs? Where is he going to find the amenities that he has at Aix? Will he find anywhere else people who are so fond of him and look out for his health with such care? What can take the place of the charms one tastes in that family circle where hearts recip-

⁶³ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In this long letter, of which we publish only two extracts, Eugene makes the proposal that his mother sell the lands at St. Laurent-du-Verdon, speaks of his visits in Paris and asks why his sister does not write. On the day he wrote to Eugénie mainly to inquire into her life with the Boisgelins and to find out what was being said in the family circle about Eugene's plan of holidaying in Provence. Eugénie replied at some length on March 28, saying that while Roze-Joannis thought he would not come, Mrs. de Mazenod would be happy to see him but thought he could save the 400 francs. In general there was a lot of apprehension about him coming dressed as a cleric as then, wrote Eugénie: "You are leaving yourself open, so to speak, to not being able to draw back, seeing that having taken this first step in such a public fashion, you would feel a certain shame were you to change your mind, whereas if you did not appear in your new dress you would keep more freedom and give yourself more time to do the necessary reflection. There, my dear friend, you have everything I have heard on the topic."

rocate the tenderest and most sincere affection. It is quite easy to find flatterers somewhere else, so-called friends, but how deceptive it all is; egoism or self-interest is what is really behind these false appearances; there is no question of the heart being in it, and without heart what's the point of anything? Beyond that, I have no comment to make except to convey the pain such a plan would give me, first because I feel this departure would be painful for you, and also because, in spite of the difference of opinion on some articles of faith and some old quarrels best forgotten, at least so far as I am concerned, I am really fond of my uncle and view his separation from us with pain. It is rather unusual but all my affections bear the imprint of my character, both strength and sensibility. When I love, I do it with constancy but tenderness always gets mingled in with it and this often brings sorrow in its wake as it makes me feel very vividly anything that is opposed to my heart's sentiments and affections. Do let me have some details about this dismal plan of my uncle. I still like to flatter myself that his absence will only be temporary and that after a short absence he will return to enjoy that dear place of retirement that held such charms for him, were it but to receive the friendly, informal visits of his darling cousin "who has no equal" and of her children. Darling mamma, I re-echo that you have no "equal" and send you my most affectionate greetings, not forgetting either to urge you to take good care of your precious health ...

48. Spiritual conference⁶⁴.

Eugene is not worthy to preach God's word. Thanksgiving for graces received, especially to his call to priesthood. Commentary on a page of the Gospel according to St. John. A comparison between Jesus' holiness and Eugene's sinfulness. Trust. Armed with the cross, he will enter into combat with the enemies of salvation.

[March 19, 1809]⁶⁵

As one who has but lately fled the world's snares, but now been introduced within the sanctuary, and so recently admitted to the company of the Saints, how dare I, Sir, lift up my voice among my brothers, in the presence of my Fathers and Teachers to preach the sacred word of our divine Saviour. Will I be so rash as to dare to undertake to break the mys-

⁶⁴ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, DM V-1.

⁶⁵ Undated. The opening phrases would indicate that it was written after the reception of tonsure, December 17, 1808. Eugene comments on John 8, 46-54, the gospel read on Passion Sunday.

terious seals which I am scarcely worthy of admiring in silence; foolishly swollen with pride at the precious dignity that the Church has but recently conferred on me in admitting me to the number of her levites, am I to imitate those all too notorious priests of the Old Testament who drew upon themselves God's curse and most terrible chastisement for arrogating to themselves a right that was quite alien to their functions? No, Sir, you must not expect from me anything but the expression, all too imperfect, of the feelings of gratitude with which my heart is penetrated at the sight of the great mercies the Lord has bestowed upon me. Anything more would be out of place in my mouth, and it would not be without good cause that I would fear to hear addressed to me those formidable words the royal prophet was once inspired to utter: "Sinner, who are you to preach my word, sinner, tremble, for you pollute my acts of justice by your proclamation of them. *Peccatori ... dixit Deus: quare tu enarras justitias meas, et assumis testamentum meum per os tuum* [Ps. 49, 26].

It is then the mercies of the Lord I must proclaim: *Confitebor tibi, Domine Deus meus, in toto corde meo, et glorificabo animam tuam in aeternum quia misericordia tua magna est super me* [Ps. 85, 12,13]; for he has quite exhausted the treasures of his grace for my sake. *Misericors et miserator Dominus, patiens et multum misericors* [Ps. 144,8]. Yes, I will proclaim them all the days of my life, and every moment of the day, *Vespere et mane, et meridie narrabo et annuntiabo* [Ps. 54, 18].

Beginning with the happy moment when, regenerated in the saving waters of baptism, I was raised to the awesome dignity of child of God, loaded with my Saviour's gifts, I could more easily count the successive and rapid movements of my breathing than the number of the inestimable benefits that this adorable Master has poured out on me in generous measure. But there is not one of them, I do believe, that I can more suitably dwell on than that ever-memorable act of mercy by which this powerful God snatched me with sweetest violence from the midst of a corrupting world, where sadly seated with the wicked, and by a fatal necessity living among them, I ran the risk at every moment of succumbing beneath the multitude of poisoned draughts with which they plied me.

From that moment, (Lord, you are my witness), my eyes have been turned to the sanctuary of your son, and if I did not yet dare to hold it in my gaze as something destined one day to be my heritage, I sighed already for the happy moment when it would please you to make your voice heard by your servant. No doubt my prayers reached you, as you deigned to grant them. You restored my flagging courage, and helped me overcome the obstacles that every day grew more. Helped by your power-

ful grace, I overcame without difficulty, nay joyfully trampled underfoot the barriers that vanity, the world's false prejudices, and even more a misplaced tenderness for persons you command us to honour and love, but to whom you wish to be preferred, seemed ever to place between the altar and myself.

Ah Lord, one voice does not suffice to express, and one heart cannot elicit the gratitude that is due to you for such a great blessing. One heart! But can I doubt that at this very moment you are receiving the tribute of as many hearts as I count here brothers. Sweet effects of that intimate charity that unites disciples of one and the same Master, gives us a common interest, and so discharges through that wonderful harmony the debt incurred by one alone and which, left to its own resources, it could never satisfy.

May I not be permitted, Sir, to confine myself to proclaiming the blessings and mercies of my God towards his wretched creatures? What reason can there be for obedience to command me to break off the recital, and order me to raise my head from the dust to take in hand the Gospels of Jesus Christ, so as to share with you the feelings that this reading inspires in me, the affection it gives birth to in my heart.

Alas! The first words that strike me as I open today's Gospel, while giving me a just idea of the sublime perfection of our divine Master, are all too apt to bring me face to face again with the emptiness of my misery.

What a comparison in effect do they not leave me open to? I see the model I must imitate, the living example I must follow, challenging his deadliest enemies to convict him of a single sin, discover in him the least fault, *quis ex vobis*, he says to them, *arguet me de peccato* (Jn. 8,46). I see him reminding the princes of the priests, the Scribes, and the Pharisees of all the circumstances of his innocent life, the heroic deeds of his tender charity for us, the dazzling miracles infinitely multiplied for the sake of mere ingrates, perhaps revealing to them all the love still pent up in his heart, and what he was about to do to save those very people there who had designs on his life, and lovingly adding, at each point in this ravishing portrayal, these words, applicable to him alone amongst the children of men, *quis ex vobis arguet me de peccato*, to force these hardened persecutors to admit by their silence that he was really sinless.

There you have the features that characterize my model.

How can I but be dazzled by such a pure and brilliant light? and are not my fears justified⁶⁶ when I consider that far from having the least

⁶⁶ Written over: "Is not my discouragement justified?"

resemblance to the one I must of necessity imitate, there is nothing in my life that is not in stark contrast with such virtue.

Jesus challenges his implacable enemies to find a single sin in him.

My dearest friends, however prejudiced they might be in my favour, could not but agree that I am the greatest of sinners.

The Saviour's whole life is totally consecrated to his Father's glory. Mine, alas, could scarcely muster a few moments of non-resistance to his grace.

The heart of Jesus burned with love for us. Mine is deadened to its devotedness.

At the very moment when the immaculate Lamb has just forced his persecutors to admit he is sinless, he humbles himself, and far from showing any complacency over the advantages such an admission gave him over his despicable adversaries, he immediately adds these remarkable words: "If I glorify myself, that glory of mine is worthless": *Si ego glorificabo me ipsum gloria mea nihil est* [John 8, 54].

While I for my part, none of whose actions may yet have found acceptance with the just arbiter of merit, scarcely have I accomplished the most ordinary act of the commonest virtue when I imagine I have filled heaven and earth with consolation and joy.

But what is the good of continuing on any further with this parallel which shows me up in all my poverty and serves but to plunge me ever deeper into discouragement of a damaging kind.

After all, is the past all I have to turn to? Can I not stand on the present moment with its hopes for the future? If Jesus, at the time of his entry into Jerusalem, at the moment when he clearly proclaims the kind of death he would be made to undergo, believes he must establish his innocence in a way that cannot be contested, must I forget that our God wipes away the blemishes of those who return to him with all their heart, and must I renounce the career he has himself laid out for me, because I am not bringing to it all the advantages he had enriched me with?

No, Lord, when I enter on the exercise of the sublime ministry it has pleased you to call me to, I will not say, it is true, as you did: *quis ex vobis arguet me de peccato*, but I will loudly confess my past iniquities, they will be ever present in my mind, but rendered powerless by penance they can no longer be the hated object attracting your vengeance.

Well, then! not having imitated my model in his innocence, will it be denied me to imitate him in his devotion to his Father's glory and our salvation?

Ah, if it was in my power to betray the first vows I made in baptism, is it not open to me to follow my Master on to Calvary and do him homage afresh of my fidelity at the foot of his cross and wash my robe in his blood after staining it with my own?

Like cowardly soldiers who have in the first assault shamefully abandoned their colours, can I not like them make reparation for my wickedness and recklessly hurl myself into the midst of the enemy ranks?

Yes, Lord, you will give me the strength for this, for you have deigned to inspire my heart with this desire. Armed with the sacred sign, symbol of the victory you have gained over hell, inwardly blazing with that burning fire you came on earth to set alight, I will trample on your enemies like a roaring lion and snatch back the prey they have seized from you, I will harry them to their last entrenchments. And never will I count my task completed until I have displayed your cross on the forehead of the proudest of them, or, sore-pressed by their number and pierced by a thousand wounds, I breathe forth my last, as I say and with better reason than ever: *Miserator et misericors, Dominus, patiens et multum Misericors*.

49. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix⁶⁷.

After his ordination Eugene does not intend to get involved in temporal affairs. A student at 28 years of age. Story of his vocation, the directors he consulted. Eugene will never become a Greyfriar, and feels no attraction to the "Retraite". Examinations. Holy Week.

From the Seminary St. Sulpice, March 23, [1809]

Do not lose sight of the sale of St. Laurent, which, I think, will take a load off your shoulders. You must quietly encourage Mr. de Barras' interest but without letting him know you want to get rid of it. Shrewdness is called for in this instance. After all, if, to make this land productive is

⁶⁷ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB 1-7. We omit in particular the opening of this letter in which Eugene thanks his mother for several letters and explains the high cost of living in Paris, hence his expenses are high. He advises selling the land at St. Laurent, gives various items of news and speaks of various errands.

always going to be uphill work, it cannot be of any further use to us, for neither your sex nor your health permit you to take on this responsibility and my state in life forbids me getting involved in all such affairs, for I have not become a cleric to work the lands of this world, but to cultivate the vine of the Father of the household. These concerns are incompatible and I am quite determined that I will rather be satisfied with a crust of bread than get involved the least little bit in temporal matters, no matter what ... But that is enough of that, at least for now, for it is time I prepared my class. It seems odd going to class at 28 years of age; the example of St. Ignatius Loyola who started learning Latin at 30 years of age encourages me all the more as this did not stop him later on from doing very great things for the good God. I pray I may imitate him in his devotion for the glory of God and the salvation of my soul.

24th

Your conjectures go wide of the mark and your motherly intuition has led you astray in thinking that Father Charles⁶⁸ was involved at all in the decision that the Lord and only the Lord was so gracious as to inspire me with. So do not exclude that saintly man from your good graces, you will never have a better intercessor with God. The only part he had in the decision I took is that he prayed a lot to God for me; it is Mr. Beylot⁶⁹ actually who was towards the end my confessor, but what gave rise to the misunderstanding was probably the concern I showed about a letter enclosed in the parcel which Mr. de Rafelis delivered, in which I told you there were details that I was not happy for everyone to know about as in it I had related things belonging to the internal forum. After that you noted the arrival of a little letter for Father Charles and, associating these two things, you concluded that it was to him I had given my confidence; you were mistaken in that, for although assuredly Father Charles merits the confidence of any person wishing to go to God wholeheartedly, however I had never been inspired to address myself to him. Now I am going to give you the solution to the riddle. When I was being urged more strongly than ever by grace to give myself entirely to God's service, I did not want to do anything rash and you must have seen that I began to move out of that state of tepidity into which I had fallen and which would infallibly have

⁶⁸ Charles Bretenière, superior of the boarding school of the Fathers of the Christian Retreat, or Greyfriars, founded by Father Receveur and set up in Aix after the 1801 Concordat.

⁶⁹ Canon J.J. Beylot.

led to my death, I tried by a much greater fervour to merit new graces from the Lord and as this good Master is generous, he did not fail to grant them to me. I prayed, got prayers said, consulted, I ruminated in this way for a year over the design Providence inspired me with; finally, as the time drew near when I must make up my mind, before making a final decision and so as never to have to reproach myself with not having employed every possible means of knowing God's will, not content with having consulted at Paris one of the best directors existing in the world⁷⁰, in whose hands I am at present, I went to Marseilles for the express purpose of unbarring my soul to a saintly and experienced man⁷¹, I had several sessions of several hours with that angel of peace, after which I could no longer have any doubt that God wanted me in the clerical state, towards which, notwithstanding the circumstances and perhaps because of the circumstances, he was giving me a definite attraction.

It is to this holy priest that I wrote in detail, laying bare my soul to him, but you could not have seen the letter that I wrote him as it was enclosed with that of Miss de Niozelles⁷² to whom I entrusted its delivery. So now you know it all. So offer your friendship to Father Charles and especially ask him to pray for you. The conversions the Lord works every day by his ministry are a sure guarantee that he is pleasing to Him. My letter to him was no more than a little reminder asking him to pray for me at the time I was entering the army of the Lord.

I could not help smiling when I read your plea not to get too involved with these good Brothers⁷³ and to remember that our mission must be different. I thought I detected in this maternal solicitude a certain anxiety lest I become attracted to the way of life of these good Brothers as I had veneration for their virtues. I must not keep you on tenterhooks before reassuring you about this. I have never for a single moment thought of taking a step so much beyond my strength and so little to my taste. It would take a quite different kind of virtue than I have to embrace the highest level of evangelical perfection and God has never inspired me with the least attraction to the Retreat⁷⁴ and an over-large degree of dependence. If one

⁷⁰ Mr. Duclaux, Sulpician.

⁷¹ Father Augustin Magy (1726-1814), former Jesuit. We still have some extracts from letters of Father Magy, copied by Eugene, cf. Postulation Archives, LM-Magy.

⁷² Miss Julie de Glandevès de Niozelles, who corresponded with Eugene 1808-1809. Rey copies several of her letters, I, 84-87, 89-90, 98.

⁷³ Mrs. de Mazenod was referring to the Greyfriars, cf. *supra*, note 68.

⁷⁴ "Retreat" here seems to mean: Fathers of the Christian Retreat, cf. H. Verkin, in *Etudes Oblates* 26 (1967) 385-388.

day I can do something for this establishment, I will do it with all my heart, as I am convinced they do an enormous amount of good, but that is as far as it goes...

... I thank my uncle for the little letter he was so good as to write, I will write a reply after Easter, for between now and then I will not have time for anything. The examinations begin tomorrow, Friday, there will be some on Saturday, all Monday and all Tuesday, a part of Wednesday; we shall be at our desks from 8:00 in the morning until 5 o'clock in the evening. I leave you to guess how nice that is. But the holy days will put all that right, especially as I have managed to be serving at the altar on Thursday and Good Friday. I like this a whole lot more than being stuck in a pew where one can see nothing of the ceremony; you have to have the fervour of a seraph not to find the services extremely long from there, the way they chant in Paris.

Goodbye, dearest, wonderful mamma, I wish you and all the family in abundance all the graces Our Lord merited by his death and send you my most affectionate greetings. Pray for me.

50. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix⁷⁵.

Reflections on the Holy Week and Easter ceremonies. Order and details of the services. Suppressed feasts. Sons of the leading families called to the army. Answer to his mother's objections to his vocation which he has been reflecting on for three years.

From the seminary St. Sulpice, April 4, 1809, despatched 7th.

It is Easter Tuesday and there is still a touch of ice in the air; although it was less cold on Easter Sunday, even so it was sharp enough. I felt it less than the others as for the whole day I was wearing a cope over my shoulders, and for a part of the time a cross that weighed a couple of hundredweight in my hands. What a ravishing ceremony for Christians, how the heart was bursting, what joy as one joined with the whole Church of heaven and earth to celebrate the glorious Resurrection of Our Saviour. After journeying with him through the sad event of his Passion, after weeping over the torments that our sins made him endure, how consoling it is to see him rise triumphant over death and hell, and what gratitude must fill our hearts at the thought that this good Master has really willed

⁷⁵ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB 1-7. Only a few paragraphs of this letter are omitted, in which Eugene speaks of letters received, the Wednesday breaks, and the land at St. Laurent.

to make us sharers in his resurrection, destroying the sin that is in us and giving us a new life. That day we spent a good twelve hours in Church, I would not have wanted it to be a minute less. It was like being in heaven; so what are the joy and happiness we experience in that blessed homeland going to be like? But I am writing a letter, not a meditation outline, so I spare you my reflections.

I had asked to be one of the ministers in the Holy Week ceremonies and I got my wish; so I was on the altar Thursday, Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday, morning and evening. My role is cross-bearer and holding the paten during the Sacrifice; this ministry ought to belong to a sub-deacon, so you can imagine that as I fulfilled it I had to make many acts of humility, acknowledging my unworthiness to approach so close to the altar and hold in my hands the vessel on which O.L. is deposed for a part of the Sacrifice.

I know you are interested in all these details and I will sketch out our timetable for Easter Day, but first I want to tell you that one of the most moving things, and one that attracts a large number of pious people, is on Good Friday at 4:00 a.m. when the seminary goes in procession to the tomb, or altar of repose, to pray kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, you know that our prayer lasts an hour; imagine the striking effect produced by eighty clerics in surplice and camail, with a group of venerable elders at their head, known for their virtues and merits, all on their knees and absorbed for a whole hour in meditation on the Passion of O.L. I was amazed on entering to find already in the chapel a large number of ladies along with some pious men, in their places and already at their prayers.

Easter Day found us in the Church at 4:00 a.m. to sing Matins, Lauds and Prime. After Prime, a first High Mass was sung at which the seminary received communion; (there are some feasts in the year on which the seminary communicates like this in the parish: Christmas Eve, Ash Wednesday, Holy Thursday, Easter Day). It is a superb sight, but how much more beautiful when seen with the eyes of faith. First the deacon and sub-deacon receive the Body of J.C., then there come up level with them the cantors in copes, the assisting clerics in tunics, there are six of these, the *crucigeror* (that is what my role is called, namely, the cross-bearer), the *crucigeror* in cope in the middle. After they have communicated they split into two and go and form a straight line on each side of the altar, in such wise that the assistant priest in cope is on the first altar step on the epistle side, the *crucigeror* likewise on the gospel side, three assisting clerics on each side on the remaining steps, all facing the people with hands together. The seminarians come up four by four, and all

receive holy communion in turn, after which they all return gravely one after the other to the choir from whence they had come to form a circle around the altar. It was 9:00 a.m. when we emerged from the Church. We returned at 10:45 for the second High Mass at which I was again crucigeror. The ceremony did not finish until 1:30. Vespers began at 4:00 p.m., then the sermon, then benediction, in short we did not get back to the seminary until 8:30. Adding up all these hours you will see it works out at twelve, but you would have a job to work out the amount of happiness I felt during this time that seemed to me to flash by like a minute. I was so happy, in the superb Temple I found myself in, at the sounds of joy that re-echoed in my ears and penetrated to the depths of my heart; I went in spirit through the churches of the whole earth, where at the same moment the vaults were resounding with the praises of the Risen Lord. I was in Aix, I was in Rome, I was in China, everywhere I encountered the same transports of joy for the same reason. Not content with this experience of harmony with every Christian scattered over the face of the earth, I dared to penetrate heaven itself. I was not slow to grasp that all that captivated me here below was but a feeble echo of the joy, the inexpressible happiness, that animated all the blessed on that day that the Lord had made. How great is the heart of a Christian, how many things it grasps simultaneously, it seems at first as if the least consolation will fill it and it is about to burst; not at all, it is always capable of containing more, when full to bursting it still wants more, but this insatiable appetite will be satisfied only in heaven.

I leave you with this consoling thought as I get ready for the parish. Less timid than in the provinces, we still observe here the ever-cherished feasts of former times with the same solemnity as before. This is perfectly in conformity with the Concordat and we abide by that. Do not fail, on these suppressed feast days, to go to the Cathedral, where the liturgy is still carried out, so as to be in unity with the entire Church. This does not mean you cannot, both before and after the liturgy, devote yourself to manual work, but the Church, while retracting in her wisdom the precept, has allowed the liturgy to stand. The Pope even provides in the Concordat for it to be celebrated always with the same solemnity inside churches; so let us yield to circumstances but not abandon the tradition of our fathers. I advise Eugenie to do the same, namely, not to be concerned about working but to give priority in her devotions to attending the liturgy at the Cathedral on feast days that have been suppressed and are no longer kept in the parishes. I would love to see St. Saviour's packed on those days.

The bell is late, so I still have time to tell you that I have come through Lent in as good health as when it started, I got so used to not

looking forward to meat that I did not feel any excitement at seeing it reappear on the table; I could quite easily give it up for the rest of my life. I am still waiting to hear how you and grandma are, after that forty-day fast. You are going to need to take, morning and evening, some really nourishing soups, and grandma must remember that Jaubert prescribed her broths; since she cannot take much in quantity, she must make up for it in quality. Goodbye, I am off to take up my cross, and carry it in triumph, since He who willed to allow himself to be fastened to it has conquered and come back to life.

5th

... Although it is not often I pass you on any news, still I want to tell you something today that you probably do not know about in the province, and that will I am sure give you some consolation concerning the path the Lord has inspired me to take, assuming that you still need to be consoled on the matter. The Minister of Police has in the last few days summoned a large number of young men, some say 200, belonging to the leading families of France; he asked them what they were doing with their time. He knew quite well that there could be only one answer, namely, they were doing nothing, for the public at any rate. The Minister then told them that living like that was not good enough, and so he invited them, - a polite way of telling them, - to accept commissions without delay and proceed to Fontainebleau to the military colleges and set about learning their trade. So here you have these Gentlemen, some among them only-sons and married, obliged to leave their mothers, wives and children, to serve in the army; I know some who come in that category who are already at Fontainebleau. But it will not be pleasant listening for a large number of young men in the provinces who are quite unsuspecting of anything like that happening. I am told that orders have already gone out to 800. Who knows, if I had stayed in the world I am so happy to have left, whether one fine day I might have found myself the recipient of such an order and had no choice but to obey. Then you would really have had something to get upset about, but as it is, instead of being upset, thank God in his goodness for calling me to an army which does not set out to kill people, but strives to save them. I do not think you should broadcast the second part of my news as it might well cause panic in some families. I just think Emile should not be too cocky about his good health but let it be rumoured, as many are all too ready to believe anyway, that his constitution is delicate. Sleep is coming on, I am going to bed. Goodbye until tomorrow.

April 6

My dear and wholly wonderful mother, someone has just delivered your parcel of March 28 and it is received with the pleasure that these kinds of presents always give me, but while I was happy to learn that you and grandma too have come to the end of Lent without too much damage to your health, I was hurt at the same time to see that it upsets you so much to see me entering the state of life God calls me to, and to see as a calamity something that should be a source of joy for you. It is a big mistake to think one can work out one's salvation just as easily in a state of life where there are less obligations to meet when God destines us for another. The graces he gives are in proportion to the fidelity with which one corresponds with them, and if everyone reasoned as you are suggesting, it would be a sorry world we live in. Do you believe that a man strongly moved by God's spirit to imitate J.C. in his active life of teaching his divine doctrine to peoples who were no longer disposed to receive it, perhaps even less than are the people of today, since despite the miracles that accompanied his work, etc., he did not succeed in three years of preaching to gather more than a small number of disciples, do you believe, I say, that such a man who had a clear vision of the needs of the Church and who, despite the attraction God gives him to work at helping her, and other signs of His will, yet opted to sit back with arms folded, sighing softly to himself about all these evils, but not raising a finger to awaken even in the least degree men's hardened hearts, would rest in all good conscience? What an illusion! Once again, one can sanctify oneself only in the place where God wants us to be. "But there is little hope of success"; in the first place, that is not so sure as you think, and furthermore even if it were, it would be enough if in the course of one's life one could help even a single soul to work out his salvation to make all one's labours worthwhile. In a word, one must above all obey God's voice, rely on his graces, and with them do one's best, planting, watering, as St. Paul says, and leaving to the Father of the household the task of giving increase.

You tell me one must reflect for a long time before taking such a serious decision. No doubt, one must reflect and test oneself, but must this scrutiny last all one's life? No decision was ever more carefully and lengthily discussed than the one I am taking. Come next Christmas, when I will probably be receiving the sub-diaconate, I will have been discerning this matter for three years; more than a year of testing in the seminary, after consulting all the best directors available, and all to know if a vocation which dates back to my reaching the age of reason, that has led me to

trample under foot the most seductive vanities and renounce all the advantages I might have found elsewhere, to say nothing of considerations that would have shaken a person less firm, to master finally all the feelings of a heart easily moved to emotion and so accustomed to get its way, to know, I say, if this vocation comes from God. Ah, my God! If the Lord had not inspired this resolution, could I have endured even the thought of causing you to shed one single tear? Answer me that, knowing my heart as you do.

So, dear mamma, do not be anxious on that account, and remember, grandma too, something I have told you over and over, that I will be far, far more close to you as a cleric than if I were married, for I repeat again it is in Aix and within the diocese I shall be working, and as I am quite resolved never, directly or indirectly, to make the least move towards becoming a bishop, in my whole lifetime I will not be budging anywhere, except to go and spend some months on the mission in the countryside, which will be my summer holidays. You will see that we are all going to be very happy, so let's begin so today ...

51. To Mrs. de Boisgelin, née Mazenod, at her house, in Aix⁷⁶.

He thanks her for details about her husband and sister-in-law and asks about her way of living out her faith. Frequent communion. Eugene does not yet know if he will go to Provence in the holidays, but his choice of vocation is irrevocable.

From the Seminary, [mid-April] 1809

... Everything you tell me about your mother-in-law, sister-in-law, and especially your husband makes me very, very happy because, my little darling, how could my cup of happiness be anything but full once I knew your happiness was complete. Never forget the gratitude you owe the Lord for the miracles he worked to bring about your happiness. He set aside, scattered, shattered the best-laid plans and designs of poor human wisdom, as he foresaw that the spouses proposed for you would turn out badly or saw that the reality did not match up with appearances. Remember that, dear, darling sister and be faithful to him all your life, this God who in his goodness has taken such good care of you for the simple reason that you were trying to please him.

⁷⁶ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. We omit the beginning of this letter. Eugene thanks his sister for her long letter of March 28 and says that, apart from her spelling mistakes she writes well. He wants to know what his grandmother thinks of his taking holidays in Provence.

You have told me a lot about many of the things I asked you about, I am waiting just as eagerly for an answer to the other questions, especially about how you are living out your Christian faith. What is your method, have you increased or cut back on what you used to do when you were single? It is wrong of you not to share with me your little rule of life. I could from here, not certainly by my own lights, but with the help of those of the Saints who guide us, correct whatever is defective, and make suggestions for improvements. We are all bound to tend towards perfection whatever may be our state of life. But we must be aware that the perfection of a married woman is not that of a young miss or a religious; she has obligations that are special and different. The kind of action that might rightly be regarded as an intolerable dissipation in a religious, is often an indispensable duty in the case of a married woman living in the world, so that what would be an obstacle for the former as to receiving the sacraments could be for the latter an extra good reason for going.

So my dear little one, do not imagine that because you move amidst society's din you must go less frequently to the holy Table, I will bring all my guns to bear on you on this subject until you surrender to true principles; for the moment I will not make any other demands on you except that you not follow your director who was advising you a monthly regime. Remember what was said by St. Francis de Sales who is without question of all the Saints the one who has carried furthest the science of direction and the one who has understood it best. We read in his works that anyone who fails to communicate at least once a month is fooling himself if he imagines he has any kind of Christian piety. Ah! God's Church would not be languishing in the state we see her if her children were not so deterred from receiving this heavenly food which alone can give Life and Holiness.

But let me stop there, before it takes me too far afield while I still have a lot of things to tell you.

So far as I can see from what you tell me, during the holidays you are all going to be scattered. You are going to be at St. Martin, grandma at St. Julien, mamma perhaps at St. Laurent. How, with the little time I have to spend in Provence, could I get around to all these different places? I deduce too from what you say that mamma would not be averse to my putting off until next year my trip to Provence, both because of the expense and to spare me a 300 league journey. I attach some weight to the first reason, none at all to the second. As to what you add, about mamma being afraid that if I show up in Aix in clerical garb I will not have the courage afterwards to change my mind, that seems to me to be really odd.

How can anyone imagine that any human consideration could make me enter contrary to God's will into any state of life, least of all the clerical state? Is it possible for someone to have so poor an opinion of me? Has human respect ever carried the least weight with me? Haven't I given sufficient proof that for me people's opinions are just so much dust to be blown away with a puff of breath.

But that question does not arise as, thanks be to God, I am not in a state of indecision about what I must do, and as for all the long reflections I am supposed to make, I do not think, when all is said and done, that one ought to wait until one's death-bed to form the resolve to come to a decision. When I came to the seminary it was not to change my mind but rather to affirm myself in the holy vocation with which it had pleased the Lord to inspire me. A year at the seminary, at my time of life, is more than enough to know what's what; and when one has stood up to this testing, one can be at peace. And so since I am irrevocably committed in the matter, there is no longer question of anything other than fixing the time for receiving the sub-diaconate. It looks very much as if it will be Christmas, with a view to being ordained deacon at Trinity in the year following and allowing a little longer interval between this order and the priesthood.

In the light of what I have said above, you can see that it matters little whether I show up at Aix with or without my soutane ...

52. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix⁷⁷.

In his prayer, Eugene asks but one thing: to do God's will. Request for prayers.

April 23, 1809

[p.2] ... Mr. de Sannes, may he rest in peace. Certainly his death is not going to make me shed any tears over his son⁷⁸. On the contrary I shall offer up a *De Profundis* in thanksgiving as he was the reason or the pretext for breaking-off the marriage. Every time I go over everything that happened over the years with regard to Eugenie's marriage, I cannot help bursting out in a paeon of praise to God for his goodness. While I'm on

⁷⁷ Orig.: St.-Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the section of the letter that is omitted, Eugene speaks of his correspondence and various commissions that take up a lot of his time; he tells his mother that, short though the days are, he is going to study Greek this year and Hebrew the following year; he confirms the news that the Emperor is requiring many sons of leading families, even though married, to enter the army.

⁷⁸ One of Eugenie's first suitors.

the subject of that little darling, I do wish that, when you remind her of what good care God has taken of her, you would urge her to leave entirely in his hands the matter of the children she is so ardently longing to have. I have got to the point of not being able any longer to ask for anything except that God's holy will should be accomplished in all things, I think that is the best prayer a Christian can make. God knows better than we do what is good for us; so let us be satisfied to beseech that this holy and paternal will should be accomplished in our regard. I forgot to bring this up with Eugenie ...

I am very grateful for the good wishes from all the people who really want to keep me in mind. As you conveyed their greetings *in globo*, I return my thanks in the same way. My only wish is that you personally ask the ones who know what prayer is to pray for me, and just pass on my good wishes to the rest. I hope my family is not forgetful of my needs before God's goodness. If my prayers were heard, none of you would have reason to complain of a dearth of graces, for I ask for them with all my might for all of you, as well as for myself ...

53. To Mrs. de Mazenod, rue Papassaudy, isle 56, n.21, in Aix⁷⁹.

Despatch of holy cards. Devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

From the seminary, [end of April, 1809]⁸⁰.

... I am annoyed that I have no commissions from you at all; [young Martin] would have taken them on most willingly. I think I will limit myself to giving him three hundred holy cards, which cost me no more than the printing charges and which will come in very useful eventually in Aix when, God willing, I am teaching catechism. It was a bargain I wanted to benefit from. The dealer was selling them at 3 sols each and I got them for 50 sols a 100. Please keep them in storage and don't give them away to anyone. I had three done on vellum, one for you, one for grandma, the third for Eugenie. You have to cut them, that is to say you have each of you to separate your two cards and place them if you like in your prayer books as a reminder that in honouring the Sacred Heart of

⁷⁹ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB 1-7. We omit the beginning and ending of this short letter. Eugene avails of an opportunity to say he is well and to send a parcel.

⁸⁰ There is no date at the beginning of the letter but Eugene says: "I wrote to you no more than three days ago." His last letter was dated April 23-25. The last three lines are headed: May 2.

Jesus one is drawing on God's love at the wellspring, and that in paying homage to Mary's you are reminding her of all the tenderness she showed for us on Calvary, when her divine Son bound us to her to be her children ...

54. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix⁸¹.

Request for prayers that Eugene will place no obstacles to the graces the Lord wishes to give him with the conferral of minor orders. Meaning of each of these orders.

From the seminary of St. Sulpice, May 10, 1809

... I almost forgot to ask for your prayers as well as the family's and those of all the saints of our Church of Aix, people like the splendid Isnardon, Denis, the Grey Sisters, religious of every order, etc., etc. It is only with the help of our brothers' prayers that we can succeed in doing anything, and we must have recourse to them all the more in situations where the Lord, as he is about to give us some of the greatest graces, expects better dispositions from us too. So pray and implore others to pray that I put no obstacles in the way of the favours God in his goodness will soon rain down on me in abundance. Soon we are beginning our retreat in preparation for the reception of holy orders. I am only getting minor orders, called "minor" not by any means as if the Church regarded them as being of little importance, but in comparison with the sacred orders that are dubbed "major", for in the eyes of faith, it is a great dignity indeed that, all unworthy as I am, I am going to be clothed with! There will be no stopping me if I get going on that subject. Charged in virtue of his office in the order of Porter to open the door of the temple of the King of heaven and earth to the faithful coming to adore him and chase away the unworthy whom the Church rightly compares with dogs, to uphold order in the holy precincts, attend to the cleanliness and decorum of God's house. Every sweep of the broom earns the Porter a crown of glory and one has good reason to stand abashed when one thinks that there have been very great saints who throughout the whole of their lives exercised this function that serves today as but a step towards attaining the higher offices of the sanctuary. J.C. himself sanctified this office when he drove out with whips those profaning the temple of Jerusalem.

⁸¹ Orig.: St.-Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the section of the letter that has been omitted, Eugene speaks about commissions for Mrs. de Talleyrand, his health, some ideas about medicines he received from a colleague, his holidays in Provence, and Eugenie who is to entrust to Providence her desire for children.

By the order of lector, one is empowered to read Holy Scripture and other ecclesiastical books in Church, and receives the grace of the Holy Spirit to do it well. "Receive this book, says the pontiff as he presents it to the Lector," receive this book and be the lector of God's word, and by faithfully and fruitfully acquitting yourself in this office, enter into the reward of all those who have duly served God's word from the beginning." How can one begin to describe the application required by the Order of Exorcist, deputed by the Church to cast out demons from the bodies of the possessed! What purity and innocence of life is required of Exorcists, so as to give no opening to demons and flee anything that might taint us with what we are charged to fight and overcome. What zeal, trust, humility he must have!

[May 12]

I had to break off writing and only now have I been able to make a fresh start. The day before yesterday I was in the middle of giving you some small idea of the importance and dignity of minor orders. I still had to speak about the one that one receives last of all and is the most important of them all, the order of Acolyte, by which one is empowered to bear lighted candles in church and present the water and wine for the sacrifice. This order brings you closer to the altar and authorizes you to enter with the higher ministers within the sanctuary, something that ought not be permitted to ministers of lower rank. One is also charged in virtue of one's office to present the incense and one is specially commissioned to serve low masses. All these functions, it is true, are sometimes carried out by the laity or simple clerics, but this is something the Church has tolerated out of necessity. Those who fulfil these offices without having been deputed to them accomplish, it is true, a good work, but they do not receive that sacramental grace which is given only to those who exercise the ministry which has been conferred on them in the prescribed rite. As to these graces, one only receives them in proportion to the disposition one brings to them. It is only too true that many do not receive any of them at all because they neglect to awaken their faith in them and form a right intention. It is to avoid a like misfortune that I am asking the help of your prayers and those of all good souls, it is so that the Lord may grant that I may never act without being imbued with a sense of the significance of my functions, their holiness, and the spirit of faith with which I should exercise them, that I am begging you to pray unceasingly. When I think that some very great saints considered themselves all too honoured by the simple order of Porter and sanctified themselves in the exercise of this order without ever wanting to go further, one has good reason to stand

abashed, I do not say out of discouragement, for when one relies on God alone one cannot be deceived and one must not be afraid of not succeeding in anything ...

55. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix⁸².

Mrs. de Mazenod can sell the de Mazenod mansion on the Cours. Thanks for the present of a watch. Eugene is to stay in Paris for the holidays. He intends to be ordained priest in Aix. Account of the ordinations of May 27, with some reflections.

From St. Sulpice, May 29, 1809

... I very much appreciate your show of confidence in me as to the offers you are receiving for the house on the Cours. My initial reaction is to say that you are the mistress and you must do whatever suits you best; if you insist on my telling you what I think, I will give you my total support without any hesitation, for several reasons; first of all, the Lord has given me the grace of calling me to his service, of so freeing me from attachment to every earthly good that it is all one to me whether I live in a hovel or in a mansion. There was a time when it would have cost me something to see the family home passing out of our hands, both because it is the family home and the place where I first saw the light of day, and because of the house's situation which has always seemed to me one of the finest in the city; today it is all the one to me and I no longer cling to that pile of stones any more than to the land at St. Laurent which I would have liked to see already sold ...

... Thanks to auntie for the watch she sent. It may be old-fashioned but it will do as well for me as if it were in the latest fashion, pre-supposing as Bermond said that it works, that is all that matters. As to the gold chain, I do not think it would be any use to me. Ornaments like that are usually worn to be seen; as I do not expect to be wearing anything except the soutane, except when travelling, a ribbon will do just as well for me. When I was in the world, I would have very much liked to have a gold chain; today it would be an embarrassment. A cleric needs to have very different tastes from those of someone in the world, and in this matter God has given me the fulness of grace ...

⁸² Orig.: St.-Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the paragraphs that have been omitted, Eugene speaks about the conclusion of the ordination retreat, an unsuccessful attempt at finding work for a man with a family to support, the small numbers coming to church on Easter Monday and Tuesday, and his underwear that is wearing out. Impending trips into the city.

May 30

... I have always hung on to the thought of going and taking you in my arms during these holidays and I see now that God in his goodness lulled me with this thought only so that I might get more settled into the seminary and patiently put up with separation from my loved ones, for the thoughts you have shared with me today convince me of the wisdom of staying on here, and certainly I could not have accepted this three or four months ago. I do not pretend it is not going to be a big hardship; but all things considered, it is better for me to stay, especially seeing how you are all going to be scattered during August so that I could hardly spend more than a dozen days with each of you. So we must put off our meeting until August of next year. I shall then be a sub-deacon, and I will give you the consolation of hearing me sing the Gospel at high mass. I am curious to know why Mr. Beylot thinks I should leave the seminary after two years' theology⁸³. Do they have some designs on me? In fact I have a good mind to tell them that when I return to Aix I want to go on studying, before taking up the ministry. If you have some inkling of what they have in mind, I would very much like to hear it. His Grace the Archbishop must have discussed me with you, and you must have been able to divine something of his intention. But be careful not to let Mr. Beylot know that I asked you, he might misinterpret the motive behind it. The way I see things and what I would want would be to receive the priesthood in Aix, so as to have the consolation of saying my first mass surrounded by my family; we will have occasion to talk about that again. I do not think our people here will like it, but it seems to me that I would have to see some serious drawbacks in this plan before I would abandon it.

We had six first masses on Sunday. The men concerned were ordained priests on Saturday by His Eminence Cardinal Fesch who also conferred minor orders on me. It was a superb ceremony for the onlookers. There is no way I could describe the feelings of the men who were the object of this wonder, the various reactions of amazement or even contempt on the part of those drawn into the church of St. Sulpice out of curiosity or piety. If only you could have been there, dear mama, and grandma and Eugenie. You would have seen your son raised to dignities

⁸³ In her letter of May 4, Eugenie asked Eugene not to spend more than two years in Paris. "A number of priests worthy of credit, she added, have told us that that would be quite long enough ... as, when you entered the seminary, you were already as well prepared as most are on leaving." Did this opinion really originate with "a number of priests"? It was certainly the opinion held by Roze-Joannis who wrote several times in this vein to Mrs. de Mazenod: cf. letters of July 9, 14, and 19.

that lift him infinitely higher than all earth's potentates. Responsibility for the Lord's temple was entrusted to me; the holy Eucharist itself has been placed in my care; the Church has conferred on me the power of casting out demons from the bodies of the possessed and preparing the matter that is to serve at the holy Sacrifice. If only you could have been there, dear mamma. How fervently you would have beseeched the Lord to grant me the grace of making a worthy response to so many favours, and to deserve still more of them for what is still in store. I must confess that I feel a sense of confidence that astounds me; as it does not rest on my own strength but is based solely on the merits and mercy of Our Saviour, nothing can shake it. The thought of my sins seems now only to stimulate me to make reparation, as I devote myself wholly to the service of Him whom I have so offended and who has loved me still more. I am still going to wait, as I said, until next Christmas to receive the subdiaconate, and it will be at Trinity I will be made deacon; I will defer fixing a date one way or the other as to the priesthood, according to what we fix with His Grace the Archbishop.

If you go to St. Laurent, I think it would be a good idea to bring back the chalice and vestments as they will not be used up there, as I do not plan to make a stay up there. Your purple and black dress would make a very fine vestment and some of the other things I know are in your wardrobe would also make very fine ones. You cannot have too much of anything when it comes to the most holy Sacrifice, it is not in that area I plan to economize.

56. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix⁸⁴.

President de Mazenod hears about Eugene's entry into the seminary and Eugenie's marriage from Alexandre Amyot. Advantage of getting surplices made in Paris. Sufferings of the Church.

From the seminary Saint Sulpice, June 1809

... I cannot imagine how they arrange to get letters through in the country where Victor and Alexandre are living⁸⁵. I understand still less how the latter could take it on himself to inform my father about the state of life I have decided to adopt, without being asked by me. It did not take this fresh incident to convince me of his lack of discretion and ignorance

⁸⁴ Orig.: St.-Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the paragraphs that have been omitted Eugene speaks about Eugenie's pregnancy, Mr. Bernard's visit, his health and the high price of surplices.

⁸⁵ Victor and Alexandre Amyot, Eugene's second cousins. We still have a letter from Alexandre to Eugene's grandmother, dated November 21, 1809. He was then living in Amsterdam.

of basic good manners. Did my father have to learn from someone other than myself about the grace the Lord has given me, and should not some trouble have been taken to break the news gently since from a human point of view he cannot have found it very pleasant? Will it not look as if I have been deliberately keeping my intentions from him? If, he will say, he could take Alexandre into his confidence, how come I am the only one not to know about it? Could he not have used the same means as he used to communicate with a mere acquaintance to write to his father? This is all very unpleasant. But as well as that why did dear auntie have to gossip so untowardly? The same goes for Eugenie's marriage, although this second indiscretion is less annoying, as she was not communicating anything that was unpleasant. Even so, it would have been a lot better if the meddler had left to us, either you or me, both the responsibility and the consolation of being first with the news. However, the deed is done, it remains only to see how the damage can be rectified and that is going to take more than a half-page letter, but I will do my best to sugar the pill, to put it bluntly. Again, really I should speak only about myself, but in fact I will have to speak about Eugenie's marriage too, to stop them imagining in Palermo that I left my mother's house as you had sacrificed me for the sake of my sister, so as to be able to provide better for her. I bet they have got this idea into their heads, and it is important that I scotch it; nonetheless this is what Alexandre's lack of discretion entails, God bless him for all the trouble he is putting me to ...

... Write and let me know the price of the best linen in your shops, so we can work out whether I would do better getting some sent here to make up two or three surplices before I leave, as they do a much better job of making them in Paris, and the seamstress at the seminary is famous. As I write this, it strikes me that his Grace the Archbishop could easily intend to appoint me an honorary canon when I am ordained priest. If that were to happen, I would not need to have a surplice, for the canons do not wear them. In any case, I should not be thinking so far ahead, for who knows what will happen before it is time for me to return to Aix. Let us devote ourselves to prayers, and pray with all the more ardour now that we are better children of the Church, and more attached to the centre of catholicity. We must not let a day go by, or ever say our prayers, without beseeching the Supreme Pontiff to watch over his Church, and to strengthen more and more his earthly representative, and uphold him in the painful circumstances he is in⁸⁶.

⁸⁶ Relations between Napoleon and Pope Pius VII were going badly. By a decree of May 17, Napoleon incorporated the Papal States into the French empire. The Pope responded with a bull of excommunication. On July 6, the Pope was taken from Rome and imprisoned at Savona. Eugene speaks of this in his letter to his mother dated August 6.

... Since you never tell me who the people are who take an interest in me, I cannot ask you to pass on my respects to anyone, except for Beylot and Denis, and the good sister whose prayers I ask. As to all the people who keep me in mind, I always give them a general mention in my *memento*, and those who criticize me lose nothing on that account as I pray to God for them too, even if it only to obtain for them a better idea of what religion is and the generous resolutions that it alone can inspire. The more a good mother suffers, all the more must her children run to her help; those at least are the feelings that God plants in the heart of those whose service he really wants to accept.

57. [To his sister Eugenie, in St. Martin-des-Pallières]⁸⁷.

Advice to Eugenie on her spiritual reading and life-style. It is essential she go more often to communion.

D'Issy, posted July 12. [1809]

... That is no excuse for neglecting pious reading, but I think it could be shortened, and in my opinion Nicole has to be sacrificed for a time, not because there is anything wrong with him, but because where there is a choice to be made one must not hesitate to give preference to books that touch the heart with love of God, arouse our desire and suggest ways of practicing the virtues that are best suited to our state of life, etc., over others that do indeed provide food for a cultivated mind but with their dry and scientific approach are quite unable to touch anybody's heart. The question I put to you is whether in your situation it is your mind that needs to be convinced, or if it is not rather your heart that needs to be aroused, stirred, warmed? For this reason a chapter from the New Testament, a chapter from the Imitation of J.C., especially Book IV, and then St. Francois de Sales, here you have the books from which you must take your spiritual reading. You can alternate St. Francois de Sales with Rodriguez and the *Combat spirituel*, that is, one on one day, the other on another, but altogether spiritual reading should not go beyond the half-hour, and it would be a good idea to divide it up, I mean that at one point of time you could read the chapter from the Imitation, and at another time the chapter from the New Testament, and at another time a quarter of an hour's reading from one of the works I cited above. You understand that

⁸⁷ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the part of the letter that has been omitted, Eugene says that his sister must keep up her studies and gives advice on this and on how to conduct oneself in the world. During her pregnancy he trusts she will follow especially her mother's advice.

to find time to do all this reading (for you must every day do an hour's literature and an hour's history, and this every day, every day), you will, I say, have to give up your passion for knitting, give it up entirely ...

It is not enough to do things for a day, you have to keep it up, it is only by perseverance that one succeeds. And to ensure fidelity to one's resolution, I know no better method than making out a programme for oneself in writing and one makes it an iron law to re-read it every week, at first, and later on every month. The programme should include everything: pious exercises, study, social studies, time of rising, time for going for a walk, for making social calls which should be as short as possible, for it is time wasted ...

So far, my dear Eugenie, I have been giving you the counsels that are suggested by human procedure; I am still left with the most important thing, for what do all the gains derived from them amount to in comparison with those that the faithful practice of religion and a devout and pious life can win us. We must not neglect the former as, since it is a duty of your state of life to live in the world, you must know its weapons, and use them to keep it captive, but after all God requires something more again from us. My dear darling, how can I find words to describe the different feelings aroused in my soul by your letter; feelings of real sorrow at seeing how far you have gone in your neglect of the sacraments, that is to say, that you have distanced yourself from the source of graces at the very moment you most have need of them; you have refused the bread at the moment this viaticum was most necessary, you have refused the walking-stick when your legs were getting weak. My child, you have spent three whole months without the nourishment of the flesh of J.C., without slaking your thirst with his precious blood, although you should never let a single week go by without strengthening yourself with this heavenly food. Since when has it been the practice to disarm oneself at the approach of the enemy? Tell me then whose help it is you dare to count on amidst the dangers of the world when you refuse your soul Him who is our strength and our life? Have you forgotten the anathema aimed by J.C. precisely against those who, whether as an insulting gesture or from a misunderstood humility, do not participate in his Body as often as the symbols under which he hides himself seem to invite. "If you do not eat the flesh of the son of man, you will not have life in you", that is to say our soul, fainting for want of food, will lose all the strength and vigour that it can draw only from the author of life, and will succumb to an incurable languor resulting in death as it opens the door to sin. But, you say by way of excuse, the carnival was a source of dissipation this year; that is precisely

why you ought to draw near to your Saviour. Do you not think you would have been much more interiorly recollected on finding yourself in the world if you had that morning received communion? I reply: yes: ten, twenty times you would have raised your heart towards him whom you had had the happiness of receiving that morning, and although dissipation surrounded you on every side, and exteriorly you would not have been noticeable in any way, your heart would have been in solitude, and Jesus, in his goodness, would have responded even as the violins played away, for he would have recognized that you were only listening to them because you had to, with repugnance and solely to satisfy one of the most painful duties that the state of life in which it pleased the Lord to put you imposes. "The more you are in the world, the more you need help", says the Venerable Liguori, who by the way was going to be beatified just when Rome's hour of desolation arrived: "the more you need help because you have greater temptations. So make it a rule to receive holy communion every eight days, (You find this in the programme he outlines for people obliged to live in the world) with the firm resolve never to omit it on account of any worldly business; for there is no business more important for you than your eternal salvation", that is to say, this holy Bishop, who only wrote his works after exercising the ministry for 28 years, seems to link eternal salvation to this frequency of holy communion, and he is not wrong, for it is the opinion of all the saints who have written best on this question; and the custom of the early Christians (who had their imperfections just like ourselves) is evident proof that that was the intention of Our Saviour which was handed down to them by the Apostles. You are aware that the early Christians received communion every day, which did not stop them having, or to express it better, even though they had their little quarrels, jealousies, in a word their imperfections as we see in Acts and in St. Paul's letters, and also from what the holy fathers tell us on the matter. I am anticipating here what you might say about your faults, etc., and even though there are still fifty thousand million things to say on the subject, I will finish up with what the Council of Trent said, which far from giving us to understand that the venial faults we commit as a consequence of the fragility of our wretched nature should distance us from the sacrament of J.C., invites us on the contrary to go and consume these faults in this sacrament of love, and teaches us that communion is an antidote which delivers us from venial faults, and saves us from mortal ones.

May God accompany my words with his powerful grace so that they produce on you the same effect that the letters of one of our seminarians had on a father he cherished, but whom he saw with sorrow persisted in

Calvinism. The letters brought the Calvinist back to the bosom of the Church. I am not asking God for so much as that, but only that he make you feel the need to yield to the arguments⁸⁸ that my zeal for your salvation compels me to expound, or rather the holy resolution to put into practice my counsels, since I see by your letter than the arguments have already begun to have their effect. I will not finish without telling you I was deeply moved by the admission you make that you spent 3 months without receiving holy communion. This sincerity I find wonderful. Please keep on giving me an account of your conduct. I hope that God will be glorified by our correspondence, and that your soul will benefit from it, provided you decide to put into practice what the Holy Spirit tells you through my mouth. Goodbye, I send my love with all my heart ...

58. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix⁸⁹.

An excursion to Rouen. Eugene unmask some fraudulent revelations. The Pope passes through Aix. Mass in the Carmelite Church.

D'Issy, September 1, 1809

So here I am back from my travels, my very dear and darling mamma. I left Paris on the vigil of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, with the companion I spoke to you about⁹⁰, and we celebrated the feast of the Assumption in Rouen. The object of our journey was to go and meet some alleged saints living in a village some 14 or 15 leagues from Normandy's capital. Everything we had heard about them was so extraordinary that it really was worth the trouble of going to see them close-up, which we did. God may have given me a very ordinary share of brains but he did endow me, thank goodness, with quite good judgment; I made use of it on the present occasion to uncover the most odious imposture imaginable; it is in all truth a great shame, for these freshly-minted saints, who every night hold converse with their guardian angels, had already, through their inspiration and following their orders, proclaimed me for a saint of the first class to such an extent that they had seen the angels holding my elbow at the moment I was raising the priest's chasuble at the mass I served the day after my arrival, and at which I received communion, surrounded by blessed spirits, angels, archangels, thrones, dominations. What

⁸⁸ The rest of the letter is written in the margin of the four pages.

⁸⁹ Orig.: Postulation Archives, FB 1-7. In the omitted paragraphs, Eugene speaks of a fall his grandmother suffered, the plan to sell the lands at St. Laurent, the expenses of his trip, his health, Roze-Joannis, etc.

⁹⁰ Charles de Forbin-Janson, cf. Eugenie to her mother, August 16, 1809.

more is there to say? I will tell you a lot more about it as soon as we meet. For now I will just say that it is a good thing I went, as if by inspiration, without having planned it in advance, to the place where all these alleged revelations were taking place, so as to undeceive a good pastor, and a large number of other people too, including two priests who would perhaps not have been undeceived for a long time, perhaps indeed never, if I had not been on the spot. My young travelling companion who very much wanted to believe, and who would have believed like the others if he had been alone, gave me a little bit of trouble on the first day; but then when I had given him tangible evidence of the imposture, he changed his tune and helped me to undeceive the others, which was not in all truth an easy thing to do, for, as they had believed without looking too hard, the precautions I had taken not to be taken in showed them clearly the trickery involved. Piety and religion were really compromised in all those sly tricks.

Thank you for the details you give about the Sovereign Pontiff. I felt for you not having the happiness of kissing his hand and receiving his blessing, but even so I am not letting you off from telling me all you still can on the subject.

I am quite satisfied with our Archbishop's Pastoral Letter, I am very grateful that you procured me the pleasure of reading it; now it only remains to know whether the Reverend Pastors read out the letter attached to it, and of which there is no mention in the pastoral letter. The vast majority of the Parisian pastors, or to be more accurate every single one with the exception of two or three, did not judge it opportune to read it out ...⁹¹

September 3

If my memory were a little better, you would have received this letter a few days sooner. Yesterday I went to Paris with several of my colleagues to receive communion in the Carmelite Church on the very spot where, on that very day, a large number of martyrs shed their blood for the catholic faith ...

[margin p.1]

P.S. What you say about the pope's passing through Aix greatly interested me, but the details we have about the rest of his route are more limited; so please write and tell me a little more about his stay in Aix. Did

⁹¹ Pastoral letter occasioned by a letter of the Emperor concerning the Pope.

the people, as they did in other place, display their enthusiasm? What did the Holy Father say? etc., etc. All his words should be preserved and his actions imitated.

59. For Grandma⁹².

Pilgrimage to the Calvary on Mont-Valérien. He strongly urges frequent communion.

Issy, September 15, 1809⁹³.

... I have just come back from the most enjoyable and edifying pilgrimage I have ever experienced, and now I want to give you the pleasure of hearing about some of the highlights from my lips, for I know quite well that this will appeal to your sense of piety.

Some two leagues outside Paris you will find a hill called Mont Valérien, on whose summit you will see the ruins of a monastery, once the home of Hermits. The ownership of this pleasant spot, after changing hands several times during the revolution, was acquired by the Parish Priests of Paris who wanted to restore the representation of Calvary that had been there in former times. I don't know how they managed it, but they were so lacking in foresight that they didn't have the wherewithal to pay and were obliged to forfeit their deposit and relinquish the property. It was painful for the faithful to see a place that was dear to all the good people of Paris fall once again into impious hands and what had once been a place of pious pilgrimage revert again to being a rendez-vous for drunkards from all around.

At that moment the Abbot of La Trappe enters on the scene and counting more on Providence than on any funds he might have had he secured the purchase of this holy place with a view to restoring it to its former usage and entrusting it to the guardianship of some of his brothers, charged to bring back to life the first fervour of the hermits of old.

⁹² Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB I-6. In the omitted section Eugene says the academic year is about to open and that his not having gone to Aix means that he is spared the pain of a "fresh separation".

On the receipt of this letter, the grandmother wrote to Mrs. de Mazenod on October 9: "The letter that dear Eugene wrote me filled me with consolation. I could not hold back my tears as I read this edifying letter. His love for God is ample proof of the grace of his vocation and that it is no human motive that makes him embrace so holy a state. His perseverance and zeal must be an assurance for us that he has a good vocation."

(93) Letter begun on the 15th, but finished after the 19th, the day of the pilgrimage.

This pious plan succeeded beyond all expectation, the stations of Jerusalem, otherwise known as the *Via Crucis*, were re-established and the Cross planted anew on the hill's terrace where you can see today larger than life O.L. crucified, with Longinus on horseback leading a group of Roman soldiers, and piercing him with his lance, on one side, and the Most Holy Virgin followed by the holy women on the other side in an attitude of sorrow, these personages all being life-size models in coloured terracotta.

The Parish Priests of Paris observed this moving act of restoration, and made it their business to re-instate the former custom by which each parish was bound to come in turn on pilgrimage to the Calvary on a day in the octave of Holy Cross.

The parish of St. Sulpice has its day like the others and this day is fixed for Tuesday in the octave of the Exaltation. On that day his Reverence the Parish Priest invites along 14 seminarians, and naturally he invites them to dinner on the mountain, and the clergy of his church too. I was one of the 14 elect, without having asked for it, as I had no idea of the consolations that awaited me in that holy place.

The general rendezvous is Suresne, a village at the foot of the mountain. The pious Parisians, having been alerted on the Sunday preceding, all find their own way there, along with the members of the major catechism group and the association of young ladies, the confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament and the parish clergy. The seminarians too find their way there, but by another route, for as you know we are away in the country. So we left Issy at 5:00 a.m., passed through Sèvres where they make the beautiful porcelain of that name, we crossed the park of St. Cloud, imperial property, and arrived at 7:00 a.m. at Suresne. All being ready and departure time having arrived, we set out in procession, the sign of our redemption at the head, the people singing canticles and ourselves the *Miserere*, then the *Vexilla Regis* which it was really moving to sing as we went up the mountain side, a reminder of the place where our divine Saviour consummated amidst the most awful torments the work of the redemption of mankind. Once arrived at the top, we adored the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the Church, of which a big section is actually only a tent, and then emerged again in procession, to make the stations. At each station we had some edifying words relating to the episode of the Passion we were to meditate on, which were heard in profound silence by 3 or 4 thousand people arranged like an amphitheatre on the hillside, which constituted the most picturesque and edifying sight you could imagine. What could be more ravishing in effect than to see the flower of

the capital's Christians dragging themselves along with faith and compunction in the sorrowful footsteps of the Saviour, receiving in exchange, from their generous Master, such an abundance of consolation that each one of us I felt would have refused to exchange a crown for the Cross we clutched and desired to clutch still more closely, while beneath our feet we see, and in our mind's eye trample on, Paris, horrid cess-pit of every vice, scene of the triumph of the sworn enemies of this crucified God to whom we had come to offer our homage, in reparation for the outrages he daily receives from them.

At the end of the Stations of the Cross, we went back into the Church to sing high mass and hear a sermon. Everyone took communion so as to gain the plenary indulgence (there were more than 600 communions) and I can assure you, darling grandmama, you were not forgotten. I find it very consoling to remember my dear relatives at the moment I am offering God my feeble acts of homage, I feel my prayers must be heard by One who was the best of sons when my prayer is for the sanctification and happiness of my darling mothers, my father, my sister, in those moments when the soul is emptied in an abyss of joy as it contemplates its lovable Saviour within itself, where he has come and taken up his place so as to identify himself in some way with it, and fill it with his gifts and graces. My God, is my constant prayer, may those I love so tenderly experience the ravishing effects of your holy presence, and to that end afflict them with an insatiable hunger for this heavenly food which is the only thing that can produce effects so powerful. How can anyone go a whole month without slaking his thirst with this precious blood which is there on the altar for no other reason than to provide us with nourishment virtually every day? How can souls that fear God and hold mortal sin in horror and would prefer death to offending their God and thus risk the death of their souls, how can these souls I say keep their distance in a way so hurtful to Our Lord who cries aloud to them from the altar where he is waiting for them: Come to me, fear nothing, am I holding a thunderbolt in my hand? do you not rather see in me your souls' physician, hidden under the species of bread to give you proof that it is as necessary for you to feed on my flesh, to restore your exhausted strength, sustain you in virtue and make reparation for the faults that are inseparable from your nature, as it is for the body to be nourished with its daily, material bread. What a terrible account there will be to pay on the day of judgment when O.L.J.C. reproaches us for our lack of eagerness in responding to his pressing invitations and when we see with our own eyes that we might have been spared a prodigious number of faults had we been ready to make use of the remedy that the Saviour procured for us in his immense charity. If

only we really grasped that truth that the holy Council of Trent teaches us: that communion is a salutary medicine that delivers us from venial sins and preserves us from mortal ones.

However, I see I have somewhat wandered from my topic. After our thanksgiving, it was one o'clock and time for dinner. Soup, beef, mutton and a cold plate, as wide as your hand and as long as the table, were what we had. At 3 o'clock, vespers and benediction, then a little talk from the parish priest for his pilgrim parishioners, delivered at the foot of the Cross and listened to with piety and recollection, sentiments that had prevailed throughout the day with this chosen flock. After satisfying our piety and that of the faithful with a kissing of the relic of the true Cross, we came down to Suresne in procession, as in the morning, singing compline with joyful strains; and so the countryside re-echoed with the praises of the Saviour, and the Cross, soaring high over Paris, triumphed over its ferocious enemies. As we came to Suresne we intoned the litanies of the Blessed Virgin in thanksgiving to herself and in testimony of our filial devotion, and to include her in the triumph of her Son, she who had shared so much in the sorrows and torments of his passion. At Suresne we parted, and each went his own way, blessing God for the graces and consolations he had willed to bestow on us, and echoing in the joys of our hearts that a day spent in the tabernacles of the Lord in the midst of his holy solemnities is incomparably better than a thousand, what am I saying, than a thousand million days spent in the false joys of the world's foolish children.

My little tale has brought me to my page's end and I make use of this little space to give you a thousand kisses, with all my soul.

60. [To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix]⁹⁴.

Eugene answers Mrs. de Mazenod's objections to his vocation. His state in life will allow him to stay close to her. If he had stayed in the world, as a diplomat or in the army, he would have been constantly separated from her. One can work out one's salvation only by following God's will.

Issy, [end of September 1809].

... So what are these thoughts that are troubling you, darling mama, and how in the world, after all we have said, can you still be paying atten-

⁹⁴ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB 1-7. In the part omitted, Eugene talks about the difficulty of finding safe ways of sending letters, and says he sleeps "like a log" and enjoys good health "like the Pont Neuf".

tion to the wicked insinuations the evil spirit is intent on evoking within you about my vocation to the clerical state. Heavens above! Is not the Lord the master of his creatures and who are we to dare to stand in his way?⁹⁵ If ever a vocation was tested, mine certainly has been. I have given you so many and such good reasons that I think it is quite useless to go over all that ground again. I thought you had reconciled yourself to the sacrifice, under the influence of your religious sentiments, but how can I talk of sacrifice? I have shown you as clearly as two and two make four that far from making the least sacrifice, your maternal feelings have everything to gain by my entering the clerical state. I beg you not to create monsters of your own imagining just for the pleasure of doing battle with them. What an illusion to think I could work out my sanctification in a state of life God clearly does not want for me! Once and for all, get it straight! You cannot get the idea out of your head that I could quietly work out my salvation in the lay state. That is not so, since, I say it again, one can work out one's sanctification only in the state of life God wants for us. But even if I conceded that, how would your tender feelings be any better off? Do you really think that if God had not in an act of mercy, that I can never sufficiently bless him for, and that you ought equally to bless him for, inspired me to enter the clerical state, do you really think, I say, that I would be the sort of man to grow old sitting in a corner and planting rape and cabbages? I would have taken up another career, one more dashing if you will in the world's eyes, but one that would have transported me 3, 4, five or six hundred leagues away according to the good pleasure of the government, or as my ambition or that of my friends thought fit to seek out ministerial positions. One fine day perhaps I would find myself secretary at the embassy in St. Petersburg, or a minister in some remote corner of Germany where perhaps I'd find some position more advantageous than those on offer in Provence, which would have meant a permanent separation from your side. But let us suppose that, abandoning myself to shameful sloth, I decided to spend my days in lazy idleness, do you imagine that even then you would get what you want? Today's a fine time to think that - are you not aware that in three quarters of France they

⁹⁵ Most of Mrs. de Mazenod's letters, written in 1809 and 1810, are not in our possession, but it is evident that she persisted in raising objections to her son's vocation. In all probability she passed on Eugene's letters to Roze-Joannis who wrote to her on January 3, 1810: "The day before Christmas Eve, I thought all day about Eugene and yourself. I want that child's great zeal to be always in accordance with knowledge and truth. His invincible prejudices make me tremble. Laxity is so enormous and prevalent amongst today's Christians that a minister of religion needs to have the rules continually in his mind if he is not to be carried away on the flood of human customs ..."

are recruiting a large national guard for which everyone is eligible, to say nothing of the fact that they are calling up as officers precisely the men who are most on the lookout for a quiet life? What has happened in all those departments could happen tomorrow in ours, as the law is a general one. So, I ask you, what would you have to say if you saw me forced to tote the gun over my shoulder (substitutes are out of the question) to go off to fight and probably be beaten and killed, for today life is cheap, I ask you what would you say then? What price your tears then? Would you make bold to offer God something that was not intended for him, and where would your having a son in the army have got you? If blows there must be, isn't it better to get them in the service of our God and for our God who did not grudge giving his life to save us ... If it weren't 11:00 p.m., I could go on for another three hours on this though it wouldn't take me that long to shut the mouth of anyone who tried to chop words with me about my vocation. So I will just repeat that not only the concern you ought to have for my sanctification should make you want me to enter as soon as possible into the clerical state, but the tug of your maternal feelings as well. You can read grandma's letter, you will find the description of our pilgrimage edifying ...

61. [To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix]⁹⁶.

There are many seminarians. Few children from the leading families give their lives to the service of a Church "terribly abandoned". Mrs. de Mazenod will be glad on the day of judgment that she gave her son to God to save souls; so she must stop lamenting Eugene's departure, he is only doing God's will. Annual retreat. Sub-diaconate at Christmas. He asks for prayers.

Paris, October 11, 1809

... The number of seminarians has risen considerably this year; I really think we are close to a hundred. Among the candidates we pride ourselves on, we can point to a Polish aristocrat of the same age as myself, the eldest son of an immensely rich family; his father has 24,000 vassals or serfs⁹⁷. Religion finds here some small consolation for the sheer

⁹⁶ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the part omitted, at the beginning of the letter, Eugene speaks about money he has received from his mother and of his sister's recent pregnancy.

⁹⁷ Father Joseph Szadurski, cf. J. Pierlorz, in *Etudes Oblates*, 28 (1969) 248-253.

panic, or to speak more plainly, the utter dismay with which our self-styled good society fled its sanctuary: she sees ranging themselves beneath her forsaken banners a few individuals who, over and above the priestly character of J.C.'s ministers, naturally command respect in view of their education and birth. So do not grudge, dear mama, do not grudge this poor Church, so terribly abandoned, scorned, trampled under foot but which even so was the one who gave birth to us all in J.C., the homage that two or three individuals out of the whole of France (a small number I count myself happy to be one of) wish to pay her of their liberty and life. And what reason could you possibly have for wanting me to delay any longer from committing myself, and devoting to the Spouse of J.C., which this divine Master formed by the shedding of all his blood, every moment of a life I received only to use for God's greater glory⁹⁸.

Dear mother, if you really grasped a great truth, that souls ransomed by the Man-God's blood are so precious that, even if every human being, past, present and to come, were to spend, to save just one single one, every thing they have by way of talents, wealth and life, it would still be time well, nay admirably well spent, then far from lamenting that your son is consecrating himself to this divine ministry, you would be forever blessing God because, in his mercy, he has graciously willed to call me to so high an honour by a vocation which so obviously comes from Him. So dismiss all the thoughts and anxieties that are plaguing you as being temptations of the evil spirit: that is what they are; that implacable enemy of all that is good cannot bear to see the holy religion of J.C., which he is always trying with renewed fury to make more odious and despicable, rise again one day in the hearts of many by the quality of the individual who devotes himself to its service. By submitting yourself joyfully to the designs Providence has over me, you will have a share in all the good I hope to accomplish one day by God's grace; and, on the day of judgment, you will be able to say with confidence to the Sovereign Judge: yes, it is true, I have offended you, but I gave you a son you kindly wanted for your service to save a large number of souls who without him would have

⁹⁸ Roze-Joannis seems to have read this letter. He wrote to Mrs. de Mazenod on February 22, 1810: "Poor Eugene wants to have it known that it is the deplorable state of the Church of J.C. that fires his zeal, and that he is going for the priesthood so as to come to its aid. It has the semblance of a praiseworthy and edifying motive, but it is no justification at all for someone who has not been called by God to push his way into the ministry. Uzzah saw that the ark of the covenant was going to fall from the wagon and was in danger of being broken; he reached out his hand to support it and his rashness was punished with death. God is powerful enough to look after his work ..."

cursed you eternally in hell; so place, place in the balance of my good works, the sacrifice I made you of my only son, a willing sacrifice or at least one made with truly Christian resignation and which, for that reason, must count in my favour.

But if instead of that you continue to persist in seeing as something evil the greatest grace that God could give me, and refuse to join me and trample under foot all the repugnance your injured nature feels, your heart's flightiness will cost you an untold treasure of merit, without retaining even the feeble human consolation that the devil prompts you to desire, for since I know what is the will of God, who is sovereign master of all his creatures, I must without further delay submit to it and obey him. And when I reflect that his choice of me is a choice of mercy and special predilection, I am appalled that my whole family, beginning with my darling mama, won't join me to thank the good God with demonstrations of gratitude and true joy.

By receiving the sub-diaconate at Christmas, I will get the diaconate at Trinity at the latest and become priest perhaps during the holidays at Aix; but as there is still time between now and my receiving the priesthood, we will sort everything out in the meantime, doing everything so as to assure for everyone every consolation.

[12th]

We have been on retreat since yesterday evening; but I am finishing off my letter so as to be able to send it off this morning to the person who will deliver it to you. It must be evident to you from the handwriting, how much of a hurry I was in when I wrote it; but provided you can read it, that's all that matters.

Father Charles is leaving the day after tomorrow with a young man from Marseilles who used to be in our seminary⁹⁹ and who has to go to Marseilles because his father is ill. He is the son of a watchmaker. He will give you news about me as he passes through Aix; I am getting him to see Eugenie too.

Goodbye, dear, excellent mama. Please pray for me and remember me especially in your communions, which I wish were more frequent. Ask all the good souls you know too to pray for me, that God in his goodness will give me all the graces I need and do so little to merit. I am think-

⁹⁹ Mr. Icard, cf. Eugene to his mother, October 12 and November 14, 1809.

ing at this moment of dear Madeleine; she must be really happy to see me a cleric. It is simple souls like her who take God by storm. My affectionate greetings to you, darling mama, and to our Eugenie too. Love me as I love you, and pray for me. I for my part do not forget you. Goodbye.

62. [Annual Retreat]¹⁰⁰.

No progress in piety because of lack of recollection. Resistance to grace. Resolutions.

October 11-16, 1809

It isn't hard to see that I have made absolutely no progress in piety since I entered the seminary; it will not be difficult either to uncover the origin of this very deplorable disorder. It comes undefinably from a lack of a spirit of interior recollection. That is the fundamental vice, the blight that gnaws at the bit of good in all my actions so that it is true to say that I find myself at this moment bereft of good works and that I must reckon as naught everything I have done up to the present because I did it badly.

Alas! What a sorry thought! I have spent 27 years in this world, and here I am with nothing to show for it for the next life. I cannot however blind myself to the fact that I was created and placed on this earth only to serve God, and acquire by my works sufficient merits to reach heaven.

When I look back over my past life, I see only disorder, iniquity on my side, a pouring out of graces on God's side. The most signal of all these is to have pulled me back from the gutter to set me at the foot of his throne in his sanctuary.

You would think after that that nothing could stop me from running in the path of salvation. However nothing could be farther from the truth, for I dawdle rather even than walk. What then must you do, my God, to get something out of me?

Let us at least try to get something from his holy retreat to renew me a little in the spirit of my state of life. And since I know the source of the evil, the remedy is to hand.

To think of the account I will have to give of all the means of salvation the Lord provides me with in this house!

¹⁰⁰ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, CM IV-1. Eugene left this text incomplete.

1st resolution. So far as in me is, not to waste one single minute of the day; everyone's time is precious, but it is incomparably more precious for a cleric. There is no need to spell out why.

2nd resolution. Never to lose the sense of God's holy presence; to lift up my heart to him often and perform all my religious exercises with the greatest attention, and with profound feelings of grief, love, faith, gratitude.

3rd resolution. To remember at every moment the sublimity of my vocation. The reasons that brought me to the seminary and that keep me there, God's disgust for the tepid and for those who do God's work negligently, lastly, to chase promptly away any thought that could distract me from my good resolutions, slow me down on my way, with all the more reason any that could leave me with an uneasy feeling; not to do anything childish, or light-headed, that contains even a hint of the dissipation I must flee from as it were the poison in every good work.

4th resolution. Curb the excessive tendency to talk at large about everything, be sober in speech, and especially be attentive about avoiding speaking about certain topics that get rather too close to the corruption of worldlings, *nec nominetur in nobis*.

5th resolution. Since I am unable to respond to the great grace the Lord has been so kind as to give me ...

63. [To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix]¹⁰¹.

Study of theology. Eugenie's friends and the spirit of the world. Advice to his sister about life in society. Draw strength from the sacraments.

Paris, November 11-14, 1809

Darling mama, you must have had some kind of an accident, it is so long since I had any news from you ... Do please take it into consideration that you do not have the same justification as I do for putting off writing. It often happens that I want, and want very much, to have a chat with you, but I cannot. The tract of theology we are looking at just now, treating of God, and religion and so of the countless proofs of their existence,

¹⁰¹ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the part left out, Eugene says he is not getting any letters, then he says the letter dated the 3rd has just arrived. He ends up with greetings.

and the prodigious number of adversaries who oppose these two fundamental truths, - those who like me want to study the question in depth are obliged to consult as we go along a lot of authors who deal ably with these questions, and so there are not enough hours in a day of 24. As well as that one has to study moral to prepare the next morning's class. So there is no time left over for oneself, except the times of recreation that are so short, and I think so necessary, that I have made it a rule always to take full advantage of them. And so, dear mama, from the fact that I write but rarely, you cannot argue that you have to do the same ...

I am delighted that you got on well with little Icard. I knew that his visit would make you happy and that he would tell you everything you wanted to know about me, that is why I asked him to go and see you and Eugenie as well. That little child's lady friends don't seem to have been much use to her during her confinement, as they left her with time on her hands to get bored. Apart from that, I am far from upset at her having so few ties, I find it hard to imagine who is really suited to be her friend. The young things of today are worldly to the marrow of their bones, so much so that everywhere they go they exude its spirit and taint everything with it. They give themselves airs of being experts in things they know nothing about, and make themselves so ridiculous that it would make you laugh if they weren't such a sorry sight. Our Eugenie isn't a bit like that, she clings to the good principles God gave her the grace of learning with her mother's milk, and when I say that her conduct is such as to bring consolation to the whole Church, it comes as a surprise only to those who know nothing of the intimate relations and divine bonds that unite in one and the same spirit all the members of J.C.

For myself, I declare I am overjoyed when I reflect that, by God's grace, she has given the lie to all who thought that once she was free of her mother's watchful eye, she would be like everyone else. I am so happy for you, darling mama, that you should have such a consolation before your very eyes. No dancing, no theatre, these are the two points to be held on to like the faith; not that by any means I put them on the same level, but because of the high importance these two points of moral teaching have, as so many other things hang on them. This is not to say that Eugenie must not go to places where there is dancing taking place. She is by no means obliged to stay away from social circles where this dangerous and unchristian pleasure is permitted; I go further, she would be wrong, given her position, even to entertain such an idea, and I think that you would be at fault if you were to lead her to avoid such gatherings altogether. But she must here apply the teaching of St. Paul, and use the

things of this world as if one did not use them. lament the fact that her state in life compels her to be present in the midst of fools who gamble their souls for so small a gain; every so often unite oneself interiorly with the saintly souls who serve God and praise him in their solitude, with the holy angels and all the heavenly court, and especially our darling and tender Mother Mary, who alone gives more glory to God than all the blessed put together. If she continues like this the world will be the constant occasion of merit for her, and in that way she will sanctify the duties of her state in life. How wonderful it would be if God in his goodness were to send her a like-minded lady friend, which means a right-minded one, how nice it would be from time to time to whisper into one another's ears edifying words, about what was going on around them and was hateful to the Christian heart. The angels would find more satisfaction in these little, short God-centred moments than in any long prayers a hermit might make. In the absence of such help, she should address herself, for a minute or two every quarter of an hour, or perhaps half-hour, to her guardian angel, with these or similar words: "My good angel, my body may be here, but my heart is with God. You who are constantly at the foot of God's throne, offer him my intentions, tell him that I love him above all things." At another time she might address the guardian angels of people she sees are most forgetful of the good God; offer some ejaculatory prayers, short ones, it doesn't have to be out loud, for the conversion of sinners, etc. Lastly, she must not let go the sense of God's presence any more than she can possibly help, but without getting anxious, or distressed, and taking care that no one can guess what she is doing. My God, my God, let us grasp once and for all that one can and must achieve sanctity in every state of life, and that our heavenly Father gives each of us the graces that are necessary to achieve our salvation in that state he has placed us in, but one must make use of all the means that his goodness suggests, and above all we must go and draw strength from the wells he has given us for that purpose, I mean in the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist, and that should be often, very often, yes, very often, do you hear me, very often. Reject all teaching to the contrary as being diametrically opposed to the Church's intention and that of our adorable Saviour. The more enemies one has to fight, the more armour one must put on; the harder the road one has to take, the more nourishment one must take to endure the weariness. I will not be happy until I see a change on this matter. It is the only quarrel I have with my darling family: O.L.J.C. is not being honoured in it in the way he wants: mother, grandmother and sister - all give me cause for sorrow on this matter. But here I am at the end of the page and although I am writing at top speed so that you can hardly

decipher what I am saying perhaps, even so my time has run out. I did not mean to say so much when I started. It was at God's inspiration, accept it in that vein, for it is the pure teaching of the Catholic Church, and coming from the mouth of a son and brother it has perhaps some extra weight, for clearly there is no one else in the world who cares so much about your salvation. There goes the bell for particular examen, and I have to finish and forgo the rest as I must get the usual envelop ready immediately, unless I want to go without eating, which goes beyond the bounds of duty ...

64. [To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix]¹⁰².

It is a source of merit for Mrs. de Mazenod to busy herself with purchases for the seminary bursar. Dimissorials. Meaning and obligations of the sub-diaconate. Eugene is committing himself freely to the clerical state for the whole of his life. He asks to be remembered in the prayer and fasting of Saturday in quarter-tense. He urges Mrs. de Mazenod to put into practice her son's advice on frequent communion.

Paris, November 29, 1809.

... I think the figs in question are as good as those from Marseilles last year. Don't forget while you are being so obliging as to make these purchases [for the bursar] to direct your intention in such a way as to make this act one of meritorious charity. Remember that if, as is very true, even the most trivial act done in the name of O.L.J.C. will count for us, with all the more reason will the services one renders to communities dedicated to the service of the good God and which make it a rule to pray every day for their benefactors. You know that St. Paul says these very words: whether you eat, or whether you drink, whatever in fact it is you are doing, do everything for the glory of God [I Cor. 10, 31].

... The Superior ... has asked [the Archbishop] for dimissorials for the sub-diaconate so that by receiving this order at Christmas, I can be made deacon at Trinity and sing the Gospel for you these holidays. If Eugenie's time were to have been due then I could have had a dispensation to administer the sacrament of baptism to her child. The diaconate is a sublime order, a second priesthood; the common opinion is that it is even a sacrament. The sub-diaconate is only a step on the way to it, one

¹⁰². Orig.: Aix: Hôtel Boisgelin, MJ I-1. In the omitted paragraphs, at the beginning and the end of the letter, Eugene speaks about his recreation, visits to the Cardinals, Hebrew studies and the patrimony required by the Church before sub-diaconate. He makes a list of various fruits and nuts the seminary bursar would like and passes on what he has learnt of Raoul de Boisgelin's misconduct in Paris.

that one must take, and how I am on fire to take it. Some people make a monster out of this first step, and in the world especially it gives rise to dread. As for me, it is the one I fear the least. The priesthood is the order you have to stand before in holy fear and trembling. But in the case of the sub-diaconate, what is there to be afraid of? Is it the vow of chastity one takes? But in all conscience, think for a moment. Isn't one bound to be chaste in every state of life, on pain of damnation? And chastity is much more difficult to keep in other walks of life than in the clerical state, where one is surrounded by a whole environment and continually accompanied by the most powerful of helps. But marriage, someone says ... No thank you very much, I have such an aversion and distaste for marriage that the very idea makes me ill; I would sooner spend my life in the hulks. But it is instituted by God, sanctified by O.L. who made it a sacrament. St. Paul says that whoever gets married does a good thing ... Who denies it? Marriage is a good thing for those who are called to it; and these very people have to agree that this good thing very often gives rise to some rather bad things. But, with all that, one must be chaste in marriage too, and I have always heard it said that it is more difficult to be chaste by halves, than it is to be totally chaste.

For the rest, it isn't my affair, as marriage and I are at opposite poles. So what is there to be afraid of in the sub-diaconate? Not the vow of chastity; it would on the contrary be very easy for me to show its great advantages. But there is the fact that by the sub-diaconate one is irrevocably bound to the clerical state. That is just where you are wrong. It is not the sub-diaconate that binds me to the clerical state; it is my full, entire, voluntary and well-thought-out decision. This properly speaking is what binds me; the sub-diaconate is but the means I employ to arrive at the accomplishment of this decision. God calls me to the clerical state. I want to be a cleric and I want it very much. And note that I don't want to be a cleric for eight days, six months, a year, ten years even; I want to be one for the whole of my life. Now, for that, I must be tonsured, porter, lector, exorcist, acolyte, sub-deacon, deacon, priest; these are conditions necessary to attain my end. Now what would be the folly of a man who, called to the first storey where his happiness awaits him, wanted to get there, but instead of mounting the staircase, sat down quietly at the bottom of the steps! If the Emperor commanded me to go to Versailles, there to assure me of my fortune, and the only way to get there is by coach, and I say: my one desire is to get to Versailles so as to enjoy the good fortune that awaits me there and obey the prince's commands, but I cannot make up my mind to get aboard the coach, you would rightly reply: you want and you don't want, for since you wish to go and yet you refuse to get aboard

the coach, which is the only means of getting to your destination, it is just as if you said: I want to go and I want to stay.

If only they knew in the world how sweet it is to serve the Lord, there would be none of this great trembling over those who commit themselves to serve him all their lives. So pray for me, dear mother, that I may serve him as I should, this good Master who is so rich in mercy, so powerful with his rewards. Pray especially next quarter-tense, a fast day, as you know, established to ask God for good ministers for his Church. Add holy communion to this fast on the Saturday of the ordination, for the intention that God might grant me all the graces necessary for me; clearly this communion won't stand in the way of your communicating on Christmas Day. Remind for me Sister Hylarion of our communion of prayer, and ask her and her Sisters to make a novena and receive communion for me on the day of the ordination. Ask Father Denis to remember me in a special way, and all good souls who seek God's glory ...

I am very happy to hear that Eugenie is better. Thank you for your kind words on my sermons; but the best compliment you can give them is to put them into practice; it only means correcting a few of your ideas. You live a life so conformed to the Gospel that it only remains to take the steps required to derive from it all the advantages it offers you. That is my heart's desire for the ones I love so tenderly. Affectionate greetings and love with all my soul ...

65. Conference for ordination day [sub-diaconate]¹⁰³.

Emotion felt by the onlookers, and especially the ordinands, during the ordination ceremony. Sadness at seeing the Church in bondage. Vocations are few because the Church is persecuted. Those who have the grace to be ordained commit themselves to her defence to the death.

Paris, December 23, 1809¹⁰⁴.

If today the casual spectator who is drawn by idle curiosity into the Temple should find himself entranced at the sight of a host of levites drawn from every part of this vast empire pressing forward in holy rivalry to beg with insistence, some for admission to, others for promotion in, the

¹⁰³ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, DM V-1.

¹⁰⁴ Eugene received the sub-diaconate on December 23, 1809. This undated text was certainly written at that time, some months after Napoleon had made Pius VII a prisoner at Savona.

saintly ranks; if dulled hearts, their sensitivity blunted by the cold egoism with which the world is imbued, could not refrain from tears at the sight of so many clerical students prostrate on the ground, waiting thus humbly for the Bishop to induct them into a vocation that promises sometimes a little short of ignominy to those who have the course to accept initiation; if, astonished by a devotion which makes them doubt the evidence of their own eyes, they remain in wonderment that men should run to embrace the cross of the Saviour with more joy today, when this sacred wood offers but bitterness and sorrow, than they did in the days when on taking it for one's lot one shared much more in the glory than in the sufferings of Jesus; if in a word, in a first movement of enchantment and surprise, these souls dull to all that does not bear the imprint of the flesh, could not refuse to God, unknown to most amongst them, a spontaneous tribute of praise and blessing; what then must have been the feelings of the men who were at that moment the objects of the Lord's special love, and as it were flooded by the heavenly dew of the most abundant gifts of the sanctifying Spirit; those who, enlightened by a ray of the supernatural light that the merciful Lord makes to shine in the eyes of those it so pleases him, were by a wise and free choice leaving to the world its vanities and honours and committing themselves inviolably to the one who alone is holy, alone is just, alone is worthy to be loved; those who were trampling under foot and treating with disdain the most seductive promises of this corrupting world to count only on the inviolable word of him who ever faithful knows how to recompense so generously the slightest sacrifices; those finally who utterly despising the repeated threats of an aroused hell, were thereby but all the more intent to offer to the Lord, with all the sincerity of their hearts, the most precious gifts they hold from his liberal hand, what he had given them that was most precious, their liberty and their life.

Who, sir, could express what we experienced in those happy moments? The holy thoughts crowding in on top of one another with lightening speed, the multiplicity of divers affective movements that at once both disturbed and fulfilled our souls: our hearts seemed ready to burst and in the demonstration of gratitude that such a great profusion of graces inspired in them, forgetful of the earth, they ascended through the impetus of love right to the throne of the Eternal God to mingle their thanksgivings with the canticles of praise of the angelic choirs and the whole heavenly court.

What happiness if this joy had been without alloy. But alas! At a time when the Church, our Mother, was bountifully opening her bosom for us

to draw from there all the riches of which she is the depository and faithful dispenser, how could we not but reflect with grief about her as we considered her sorrows and sufferings, how could we not be moved with sympathy for the condition of abandonment she is in. What! at the sight of this Queen of the Nations fallen from the throne of the universe into the purest serfdom, denuded of all that contributed to her glory and splendour, reduced to mourning in silence the Spouse who was her dearest delight, could we refrain from mingling our tears with hers?

No, no, these deeds that rend our Mother have penetrated deep into our souls, and we cried out in accents of sorrow: *Facta est quasi vidua Domina gentium, facta est sub tributo*: bent beneath the yoke of the nations, her own children have become her cruelest enemies, *facti sunt ei inimici*. Pressed on all sides they lay snares for her, surround her with pitfalls [p.3] to fall into, *omnes persecutores ejus apprehenderunt eam inter angustias*. Despoiled of all her beauty, sullied by those who surround her, she sees still afar off Princes who were the first ornament of her throne: *Egressus omnis decor; sordes in pedibus ejus, facti sunt principes ejus velut arietes non invenientes pascua: abierunt ante faciem persequentis*.

Ah, Lord, Lord, look upon her sadness and remember your mercy. *Recordare Domine quid acciderit nobis: intueri et respice opprobrium nostrum: innova, innova dies nostros sicut a principio*.

Alas, those happy days are no more, when by a kind of divine enchantment, at the same moment, several times in the course of the same year, there went forth from all points of the catholic world as it were so many armies ranged in battle to combat the enemy, when one counted in their thousands the valiant soldiers to whom at each change of season the Church gave birth for her divine Spouse. That once so fecund womb today seems struck by a shameful sterility. The ranks are thinned, and there is no one to replace those who have gone ahead into glory. I will out with it! The reason no-one replaces them is that the Church in its poverty no longer offers those who devote themselves to her service anything except what was the lot, the glory, the riches and the happiness of the first disciples of the Gospel.

Ah, what has become of generous hearts! Must sordid avarice be always the great mover of men's deeds? The Church at bay cries aloud to her children for help in her distress, and does no one respond?

No, no, tender dear Mother, not all your children desert you in the days of your affliction; a group, small it is true, but precious for the feelings that move it, draws close around you and wipes away the tears that

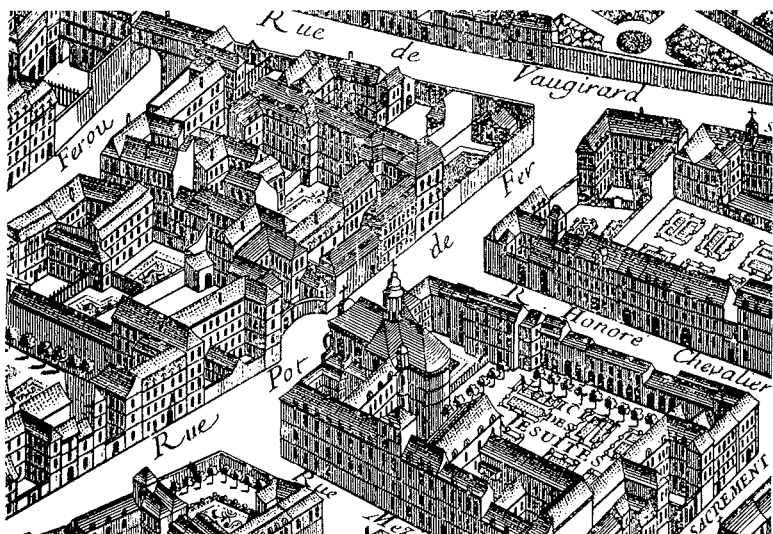
men's ingratitude provokes in the bitterness of your sorrow. Look, we are here, fix your gaze on us. We came to birth but moments ago, with a generation however wholly divine. We feel in our hearts the fulness of life, all the strength of virility. Issue your orders, there is nothing that the prospect of your needs will not move us to undertake. We know, and if we should be unaware of it, our faults and the example of our forerunners in the faith would soon apprise us of it, that strength does not consist in numbers, but in unity. Yes, united by the bonds of the same charity, anointed by the same spirit, tending to the same end, we will form that sacred Legion, that mystical phalanx that the world and hell cannot crush, we will march ahead carrying on high the standard of the cross, this divine sign around which we rally and which will emerge always victorious from every combat where battle is joined, and which by an unheard of privilege, has the virtue of procuring the immortal palm of victory for those who fall in its defence.

Animated by this heavenly Spirit, which you have just called down upon us, alone we will have the courage to combat your numerous enemies, to brave all dangers, face every spirit, form with our bodies an impenetrable barrier to your cruellest persecutors, die, yes die if needs be, to preserve you intact.

These are the feelings which the grace of ordination has given birth to in our hearts. Let us go, my brothers, and place them at the foot of the crib of Jesus who will soon make his appearance. Let us be the first thing that catches his attention at the moment of his birth, and at the very instant that Mary presents the world with its Saviour. Let us swear to him with one voice that we will be eternally faithful to the oath we have just taken to give our lives a thousand times over in defence of the inviolability of his Church.

Amen, amen.

Chapel of Loreto at Issy where Eugene spent his summer vacation in 1809, 1811 and 1812.



The Seminary of Saint-Sulpice where Eugene lived from 1808 to 1812 was at that time temporarily located at the corner of the Vaugirard and Pot de Fer Streets (facade on the latter street).



Antoine du Poujet
Duclaux (1748-
1827), Eugene's
spiritual director
from 1808 to 1812.



Jacques-André
Emery (1732-1811),
Eugene's Superior
and friend from
1808 to 1811.

1810 - 1811

66. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix¹.

New Year's Greetings to his mother, grandmother and sister. Feelings of joy and spiritual fulfillment after receiving the sub-diaconate. Eugene intends to spend his life in poverty. Importance of having holy priests, like the apostles.

From the seminary St. Sulpice, January 6, 1810

My darling and most excellent of mothers, may you be filled, not just this year, but through your whole life, through all eternity, with all the blessings of our God's generosity. This wish goes for darling grandma and our Ninette too; it wells up in me every day and more than once in the day; I particularly placed it for safe-keeping in the heart of Jesus on that ten thousand times ten thousand times blessed day I had the ineffable happiness of exchanging a wretched liberty, which I had so often abused, for this sweet and precious slavery which makes one master and possessor of all the treasures that go unknown to those who go the way of the world and its vanities. Yes, it is really true that when I was making my prostration lying flat on my face, as the whole Church earnestly entreated God to deign to send his Spirit with all his gifts upon us, I begged him for my part to bless you and convince you totally that in offering your son freely to the sovereign Master of the Universe, you would not be losing him but rather gaining him for all eternity. It would be impossible to try now to convey to you any idea of the joy the Lord poured into my soul that happy day. The kind of happiness one experiences at that moment is ineffable, and you must not think that this is perhaps because afterwards there are only vague and superficial traces left behind, on the contrary. This state in which the grace of ordination places you is stable and permanent, staying habitually in the soul, but as it is wholly divine, it cannot be put into words and all forms of expression fall short. There is a kind of spiritual plenitude, there are swift movements towards God, there are delights that

¹ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the paragraphs omitted, Eugene speaks of Armand de Boisgelin, the land at St. Laurent, Emile Dedons' plan to visit Paris, etc.

flood the soul. What can I say? I repeat, there is a tremendous happiness that one experiences in a very vivid way, but which one cannot describe to oneself, let alone to others. After such an experience, don't talk to me about the beauty of sacrifices, etc., etc. God in heaven, where is the sacrifice in giving practically nothing to get everything? So strong was this feeling on the day of my ordination that I asked God, by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and all the Saints, who at that very moment were being invoked on our behalf, to deign graciously to pour out on me the fulness of his mercies and to let me make over to him my liberty and life, which were already his own on so many different counts. How true were the words that the Bishop addressed to us as he received our vows, that to serve God is to reign! ...

What do I have to do to convince you that I am enjoying excellent health? Nobody in the seminary would dare to contradict me on this. There's nothing wrong with my nerves, chest, head, or feet. If only I could be sure that my soul were as beautiful as my body is sound; I am working on it, and persevere in the hope of getting there, with God's grace ...

Please don't forget to have sent on the Hebrew books I asked you for in one of my letters; I need them more than I need shirts. My underclothes are in fairly good condition. This doesn't surprise me so much as my soutane, for although I only have the one for winter and the one for summer, they still don't have any holes in them, although they are a little threadbare. It is true I chose a good, really heavy cloth. Thanks be to God, I don't think I can be accused of luxury or being over-particular about myself, and I hope no one will ever be able to find fault with me on that account, as I am firmly resolved never to change. An ordinary soutane, woollen cincture, hair uncurled, this is and always will be the way Father de Mazenod will dress. I really don't know what people think they are achieving when they are forever adorning and pampering this wretched carcass that is destined to be food for the worms and is never less manageable than when it is treated gently. But what is pitiable in the case of people in general is shocking in a minister of the Cross. A sensual priest is in my eyes a deformed monstrosity, to be pointed out in the street, but it is all too true that you would often need more than ten fingers to do it. So let's pray to the Lord to grant his Church, not so much a larger number of priests, as a small but well chosen number. Twelve Apostles were enough to convert the world ...

67. [To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix]².

Deaths of Mr. de Talleyrand and the Mayor of Aix. Eugene's dealings with Cardinal Mattei.

Paris, February 24, 1810

... I told you [Mr. de Talleyrand] is dead; God in his goodness gave him the grace to receive the sacraments. He does not do as much for everybody, for I often hear tales of tragic deaths, of people snatched away before they have made the least effort to return to God; for the Lord sometimes passes terrible judgments on rebels who all their lives have mocked his mercy.

I thank God our poor mayor Fortis did his duty, and, although I don't like it at all that no one anticipated his desires in such an important matter, it delighted me to see that he persisted with his request for a confessor. Although so far as practising is concerned he was never everything I would have desired for his own good, even so I always felt I saw in him a basis of religious principles. Our Master is so good he takes everything into account; but it is quite possible we are wicked precisely because he is good.

I almost forgot again to tell you that the saintly Cardinal Mattei, whose interpreter and secretary I am, has asked me to pass on his greetings to His Reverence the Parish priest of St. Esprit; I will leave that with you. We have the same Director, as I had the idea of making him a present by getting him a confessor such as mine; he profits by it in an edifying way, for he goes to confession every Friday, following the holy and praiseworthy custom of all the saints, and of those too who want to become saints. You understand I don't mean that everyone must go to confession precisely on Fridays; I mean confession on a weekly basis, that is to say, every week. I escorted this venerable Cardinal (who nearly became Pope) to every convent of religious sisters in Paris, and he was delighted with this.

² Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières. château de Boisgelin. In the first pages of this letter, that was begun on February 23, Eugene speaks about the cold weather, a walk to Gentilly and a visit to Mrs. de Brantes. He reports the arrival of the provisions sent by his mother but is still awaiting the Hebrew books sent by the scatterbrain Castellane. He is getting letters about his father's debts and is waiting impatiently for news about Eugénie's confinement, etc.

68. [To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix]³.

Mrs. de Mazenod should be grateful for Eugenie's good behaviour and Eugene's priestly vocation. Why Eugene must stay more than two years in the seminary; his social standing will not permit of his being a poorly-formed priest.

Paris, April 14, 1810.

... You make me very happy but you certainly don't surprise me at all when you say [that Eugenie] has a rare quality. I remember trying to calm down your worries at the time of her marriage, when you were afraid the bad examples she would have around her all the time would be the ruination of her. What a consolation that you can enjoy the experience of her good conduct and have the opportunity to see her several times a day. It must be admitted that God in his goodness has really blessed us in everything that concerns that child; whenever I think of it I thank him from the bottom of my heart. You should remember it sometimes too as a mark of your gratitude to this good Master who spoils you more than you realize, for whatever the world's, false prejudice may suggest, it has to be admitted that the grace he gave me of calling me to priestly service is one you can never be sufficiently grateful for, no more than myself. But to make a worthy response to that grace, one must prepare oneself to fulfil with fruit all the commitments it imposes; so it is out of the question that I would be prepared to swell the ranks of the unfortunate priests who are not half-way prepared for the exercise of their ministry and who are going to be judged with severity and no mercy for all the faults they commit or lead others to commit, for failing to acquire the knowledge they should have. Ecclesiastical science covers such a lot of things that you must not imagine it can be acquired with a few words here and there as you go along, so to speak. I don't disagree that there are quite a lot of things I could learn on my own; however, aside from the fact that I can't see His Grace the Archbishop being ready to leave me a lot of time to spend on studying, what I have in mind could well be a matter for discussion between us. Don't you attach any value to the profound experience of those who are directing me here? It is a kind of instruction you don't find in books, and that very few people are endowed with, even among those

³ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the omitted paragraphs, Eugene speaks of letters received and sent, the wait for Eugenie's child to be born, the absence of several Cardinals from the Emperor's wedding. He gives an introduction to a Polish priest who will be passing through Aix.

who have spent many years in the ministry. A knowledge that would perhaps suffice for most, would not suffice for me. That is obvious, for you know yourself there isn't anyone who, seeing who I am, my position, the rank I hold in the world, would not have every right to demand and would not in fact demand that I have a degree of preparation above the ordinary. Who is going to put to rest all the doubts, the difficulties that are always cropping up, if not a priest who by reason of his birth enjoys a greater prominence than others and to whom other priests will perhaps one day be going for counsel? This extra period of formation is therefore necessary and indispensable if I am to exercise fruitfully the ministry I am called to. The honour due the ministry is another valid reason for it. A moment's reflection on this point will clearly show you what it would take me an hour to explain. People are only too ready to scorn our holy religion, without ignorance on my part furnishing them as well with plausible motives for calumniating it. Before long the priesthood will consist entirely of peasants or even of workmen of the lowest classes, and that is already in itself a very great evil. Destined most of them to be pastors in remote country districts, they will be given little care, so that they will get off with a pinch of knowledge that would seem to lift them above their rank, so great are the world's prejudices. Let them know how to say Mass properly and be able to handle basic administration, that is all people could expect of a country pastor. That is how worldlings express themselves, but is that too how they would speak about me and others like me? It would only take the merest hint that I might be lacking in just one part of the knowledge that the faithful, and clerics too for that matter, have a right to expect from an educated man and one whose position affords him every opportunity to see this education through to the end, to set at naught the little good I dare to hope to achieve. In what esteem do you imagine could people hold a cleric come to exercise his ministry scarcely two years after he left the world? And although when I lived in society I tried to keep away from anything I thought was contrary to God's law or opposed to evangelical morality, do you think anyone could place much trust in a person one has seen practically the night before in noisy parties, sharing at least passively in the dissipation that is the rule among worldly people? You would have to be completely lacking in experience of men to think one could get away with that. God would not be happy with my being willing to neglect taking every precaution that might assure the success of my ministry. God's grace has already got enough to contend with in my lack of virtue and multitudinous imperfections without my creating further difficulties of an exterior nature that I could easily erase. I want to disappear, I want people to forget Eugene so that there can be no risk of

mistaking him for the priest. I want to enter into the lists only when I am armed at all points and morally sure of not compromising the honour of the faith entrusted to me. My first steps will be decisive; everyone's eyes will be on me to judge me with severity. If it were only a question of myself, I can assure you it would not cost me a thought; my tendency not to be very concerned about what people say about me is clear enough for you to know that I am sincere when I say that. But in the future my person, honour and reputation will be so linked with the faith whose unworthy minister I am that I must proceed with caution. That should be enough, dear mama, to make you understand how important it is for me to follow the plan I have made for myself and you can be sure has received the clear approval of men whose experience and holiness puts them in a position to pass judgment on my reasoning. The question is one conscience for me and I would have to confront even my Archbishop if his wishes went contrary to what I have resolved. All this won't stop me coming to see you in the holidays to spend as much time as possible with you, and when I say with you I really mean with you, for I have no intention at all of making any social calls but rather to take steps not to receive any; we can arrange all that when the time comes. It is not far away now and in all truth I think I will not thaw out until the fair sun of Provence warms me up. It is so cold today, April 14, that it is all I can do to hold my pen, there seems to be a block of ice under each of my feet and chilblains are coming up on my hands ...

69. [To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix]⁴.

Eugenie must not forget to offer her daughter Nathalie to the Lord; she should thank Him and implore his help. Request for prayers for the diaconate.

Paris, May 11, 1810, posted on 14th

... I don't have to remind Eugenie to offer her first-born to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Although the child has not been named after her, she will accept the offering and won't refuse to take her under her powerful protection. The ceremony for those who have given birth is definitely

⁴ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the omitted paragraphs, Eugene apologizes for not writing very often on account of extra courses and examinations; he congratulates Eugenie on the birth of Nathalie on April 24, and thanks Armand de Boisgelin for the courtesies extended to a Pole to whom he had given letters of introduction. Commissions for Emile and Mrs. de Talleyrand; holidays in Provence passing by Bordeaux with two Poles.

not in the law of grace, as it was in Judaism, to purify women from a stain which does not in fact exist. Since the time of J.C., the only stain we know is sin, and there is every reason for that. But a Christian lady makes a point of offering to the Lord with her own hands the fruit of her womb, his gracious gift, to thank God for keeping her safe during her confinement with all its dangers, but above all she is unendingly thanking God for his adopting the fruit of her womb as his child in baptism. She implores his help in giving the child a good education, and her concern is, to that end, to do all she can to be in union with the Blessed Virgin in the holy act she accomplished in similar circumstances, to have the same sentiments she had and the divine child, who graciously willed to submit himself so as to set us this example of dependence on God's sovereign majesty ...

... I am finishing my letter at this point so as to be still in time to get it off today. Thanks again for all the news you gave me on Eugenie's health. I have been with her in her suffering and her joy; and I have truly shared both the one and the other. She will have been able to supernaturalize all her feelings, accepting her suffering in a spirit of penance and submission to the severe but just sentence passed on the first woman and all who were to bear children thereafter; and her joy will have been wholly in the Lord, blessing God for using her in his service to increase the number of his adorers.

My sincere and affectionate greetings to everyone, I ask your prayers to obtain from the Lord, through the intercession of his holy Mother, help in all my spiritual needs that keep on growing as I draw nearer to the priesthood and its awesome challenge. I have already written you that, in all likelihood, I shall be made deacon at Trinity; it will take just a year after that for the priesthood. What stock of virtue have I laid by for that, God knows. The thought makes me tremble. Let us keep up our prayers. I put all my trust in that ...

70. [To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix]⁵.

Request for prayers for the diaconate. Eugene is going on retreat in preparation for this.

Pentecost, June 10, 1810

As I was waiting for Mrs. de Talleyrand's answer, I put off writing to you, and now our retreat has begun to prepare for ordination and properly

⁵ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB I-7. At the end of this letter Eugene speaks of errands for Miss de Gravier and Mrs. de Talleyrand.

speaking I must give myself entirely to that important task to prepare my heart to receive the Holy Spirit that will be given me by imposition of hands. I planned to write you yesterday, and then I would have had more time to speak more about myself, but I admit that I spent the period after dinner going to beg for a goodly number of prayers in the different convents I know and from various other pious people I have got to know. So, darling mama, this time I must be satisfied with telling you I am well and asking for your prayers and all the family's, and those of all our good Christian friends. It will be on Saturday morning, the vigil of Trinity, that the spirit of strength will come down into my heart, and I will be raised to the very high dignity of the diaconate. People in the world have no idea what is included in this portion of the sacramental character whose complementary portion is received with the priesthood; but we who, by God's grace, are guided by the spirit of the faith, we know that it is something beyond all man's merits and that even limiting one's consideration to the sublimity of the functions of this order, there is no man, however great and virtuous he may be, who should not consider himself all too happy to exercise them throughout his life following the example of so many great saints who added lustre to the Church's early history. It is true that our good Mother, with her present needs, cannot yield to the desires that a humility that sits well with its spirit might entertain, but it is nonetheless sure that she does not cease on that account to regard the diaconate as anything but a very important order and one for which one cannot prepare with too much attention and fervour. I am stopping here as I see I am on the point of pouring out the feelings my heart is filled with, which would not exactly conform to the spirit of retreat and interior contemplation which requires in these circumstances that I contemplate carefully every drop it pleases God's mercy to give me, to savour and mull it over in meditation. In all probability you will get this letter too late to be a reminder that I wanted you and all the family and all good souls who concern themselves with God's glory, to be one with me on the day of my ordination. I hope even so you will have thought of it; in any case I beg you to do and have others do afterwards whatever you did not do before hand, that the Lord, moved by our gratitude, will let his graces flow in abundance, for, I need nothing short of an overflowing share to prepare me for the most holy and awesome priesthood. I calculate the diaconal ordinations will take place on Saturday between 9:00 and 10:00 a.m.; if my letter gets to you before then, kneel before Jesus at that moment and ask him everything a mother could ask for her dear son; don't be afraid to be importunate; God is rich and generous enough to satisfy everyone. Goodbye, dear darling mama, I give you a good hug, and our dear darling

little nursing mother. Greetings too to uncle and cousin. Goodbye, goodbye, I should have ended long ago ...

71. [To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix]⁶.

To punish Mr. Emery who is too loyal to the Pope, Napoleon expels the Sulpicians from the seminary. Emotions on Mr. Emery's departure.

Paris, June 19, 1810.

I have only a moment to take advantage of Mrs. de Simony's departure: she leaves at 4:00 a.m. tomorrow, and she is on her way to Aix. I have not had the honour of making this lady's acquaintance, but I am very close to her brother-in-law who has just been ordained priest at the ordination where I had the happiness of receiving the diaconate. I won't say a word on that topic now for if I get started on a subject so close to my heart as that I won't know when to stop; and so, as I have very little time and there is something else I want to tell you about, I will get straight to the point.

It is just possible you have heard in Aix that the Congregation of St. Sulpice has been dismantled, and if you get this news without further explanation it may well cause you a lot of anxiety if I don't write and say something about it.

It is indeed all too true that this latest blow has been dealt to the faith. The Emperor, after imprisoning the Pope, exiling the Cardinals, dispersing them in pairs in different towns of the Empire, stripping them of their insignia as Cardinals and confiscating all their property, has turned his attention to the Congregation of St. Sulpice, famous in every age for its attachment to the holy, catholic, Roman Church and to sound teaching. This Company was raised from its ashes by the devotion of Mr. Emery, a very respected figure who, after battling with all the storms of the Revolution without succumbing, after saving the Catholic faith in France single-handed at a time when it was on the point of being totally proscribed anew, gave his life to the work of formation in the hope of raising young shoots in the Lord's vineyard to fill the frightening number of vacant places death has left in the sanctuary. As he wanted to devote all his energies to this saintly task, he refused on various occasions three different dioceses that were offered him. His great piety, profound knowledge, wealth of experience, constituted this venerable old man the oracle

⁶ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB I-7.

of the Church of France. Proof against all and any private interest, his sole concern was for what was good, and without passion or prejudice he often found ways of achieving it where many other clever men had given up hope.

But I see I am going on too long about someone who would furnish material for many a page and I don't have space for it. To cut it short, let me say simply that after the Emperor had named Mr. Emery to be a member of the Bishops' Commission convoked to give decisions on a number of questions put to it by His Majesty, Mr. Emery, who all his life had made conscience his sole guide, had the courage to oppose every unreasonable, not to say heterodox, pretension of the French Government in its unpleasant dealings with the Pope and in regard to other religious questions.

This holy man, the equal of the greatest figures of Christian antiquity, foresaw that he himself, and his Company, which he valued more highly than himself because of all the good it does, might be and indeed would be wiped out, but allowing nothing to stand in the way of the duty that comes before all others, namely, not to betray one's conscience, he persevered continually in the defence of principles that were clearly being compromised. From that moment his fate was sealed. And last Wednesday the bomb went off, and the Emperor, in a decree, ordered changes in the nature and direction of the seminary of St. Sulpice, gave Mr. Emery and the other directors 24 hours' notice to quit the premises, forbade the employment of any Sulpicians in the new structure of the seminary, etc. etc.⁷ The Vicars General, at a loss to replace at such short notice our distinguished Fathers, asked for a few days' grace. With some difficulty Cardinal Fesch obtained these days of grace. Mr. Emery has gone already, the rest are ready to go at a moment's notice. Gloom has descended on the seminary, and every Catholic in Paris is shocked. It is the severest blow that could have been delivered to the faith. The Government's intentions are no mystery, the only reason the Sulpicians are being destroyed is their heart-felt devotion, one that every Catholic must share, to the Holy See, the holy Roman Church, mother and mistress of all the Churches. Our good Superior said his goodbyes yesterday to the assembled community. The pain felt in parting like this is beyond description. The tears flowing from his eyes revealed his deep inner feelings, for all his calm and outwardly serene appearance. The sound of us all sobbing, his children, there

⁷ Mr. Emery was in fact the only one who left, the other directors were left undisturbed in 1810.

are a hundred of us, meant we could not properly hear what he was saying though there was not one of us who would not have liked to have his words engraved on his heart in letters of fire. No, that scene, the most affecting I have seen in all my life, will never be effaced from our memories. Everybody longed to respond to his farewell words, it was like St. Paul speaking to the Ephesians; but nobody had the courage to speak up. "Dear Father", I cried out with all the sorrow I was feeling, "dear Father, don't leave your children without giving them your blessing." At these words everyone sobbed all the more and we all fell spontaneously to our knees. This went right to the depths of his heart and melting into tears he said: "As you wish," as if violence had been done to his humility. Then with a prayerful gesture towards the crucifix at the end of the hall and with his eyes fixed firmly on our Saviour, the source of all his strength, he prayed for his blessing on us and then bestowed it in his name. You can understand that this episode took away all thought of supper and that the community's presence later on in the refectory was a pure formality. Although our splendid superiors are giving us an example by their peaceful and moderate reaction, we cannot but tremble before God's terrible judgments on France and the whole of Europe. But when we were ordained, we received the Spirit of Strength and with that we can surmount anything. This succession of set-backs will not make me change my plans, I am not going to leave Paris a moment sooner or later.

Goodbye, dear mama, your loving son ...

72. [To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix]⁸.

His intention to visit his grandmother in St. Julien during the holidays. He will teach catechism to the children.

Paris, July 3, 1810

... I had intended to go and see grandmother in St. Julien, and I was thinking of giving a little instruction to these poor people who are so abandoned⁹. I was already quite enjoying the idea of the fruit these

⁸ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. At the beginning of this letter Eugene speaks of his holiday plans, of passing through Bordeaux, of errands for Emile Dedons and Miss de Gravier. He gives various items of news.

⁹ Mrs. de Mazenod had told him no doubt that his grandmother would not be going to St. Julien. She did go as it turned out and Eugene spent some time with her at the end of August. He began, it seems, to teach catechism and made Emile Dedons and a certain Seren responsible for continuing the lessons. His grandmother wrote him on September 29: "They still retain their zeal for teaching the catechism. The children are assiduous in their attendance. Our little Vincent doesn't forget what he has learnt ..."

instructions might produce. Poor Christians without the least idea of the dignity that is theirs, for want of meeting someone to break the bread of the word. I am however convinced that they are not so far from the kingdom of heaven ...

73. [To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix]¹⁰.

Eugene is told to go earlier to bed. He counsels meekness and consideration in the family which he loves very much.

[Paris], November 11, 1810.

I have less time than ever, dear mama, as I am under orders to pay back to the hours of sleep what I have been unscrupulously stealing from them. No more saying office after prayer and therefore an hour sooner to bed; three quarters of an hour spent every day saying matins and lauds with the community and therefore nearly an hour I used to use for other things: which amounts to fifteen days and five hours I live less in a year ... You have an extra guest with you at the moment¹¹; please remember you are dealing with someone who, if you give him an inch, will take an ell: there is a sensible middle course to follow and it isn't difficult to keep if one has a modicum of intelligence and bothers to stop and think: you must be able to look ahead and foresee what opportunities the day is going to bring up to put my suggestions into effect and make plans in the light of that on how to act. Plenty of meekness and consideration (I noticed during my stay that we are weak on this point), no bad-tempered witticisms, good manners to the fore. I have often heard that nothing is better for forming the character than finding oneself living in a house where one must be continually on one's guard, where the enemy, so to speak, is always around. Now, counsel that comes at the level of human prudence the religious spirit must supernaturalize, and here it is not just a question of avoiding so far as possible every sin but also of actually ridding ourselves of imperfections. One day we strive against hastiness, the next we do battle with bad temper, another day we attack some other imperfection and, little by little, we see we have made great strides. I could say a lot more on this subject which I regard as very important, if I

¹⁰ Copy in Rey I, 113-114.

¹¹ The letters of this period do not yield any information about who is meant here. At this time of year the grandmother usually came back from St. Julien, always accompanied by Emile Dedons, Eugene's cousin. This guest might have been a friend of Emile's, or his father whom Emile had not been living with for some time. Or again Eugene may have been referring to Roze-Joannis, however Mrs. de Mazenod usually got on well with him.

didn't know it would be a sheer waste of time. No one is a prophet in his own country and least of all in his own family ...

Anyway, I have said what I felt had to be said for the peace of mind of those I love more than they can know, whatever the detachment I should be showing, because of my state in life, from any affection that is of too human a nature; but it is being said that I am adding again half as many years to my purgatory because of my family.

74. [To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix]¹².

Request for prayers for Charles de Forbin-Jackson and Joseph Szadurski; Eugene will be needing them too when the time comes for him to be ordained priest.

[Paris], December 1, 1810

... Please have someone return to the Jewish family living opposite you the Hebrew bible they lent me during my stay in Aix; it is on my desk.

The thing now is to bring to your attention two of my friends who are asking prayers of you and of other good people of your acquaintance; they are Charles de Janson who is to receive the sub-diaconate on the 22nd of this month, and Joseph de Szadurski¹³, who is to receive minor orders; with a keen sense of our need for our brothers' help on an occasion when the Lord is disposed to pour out graces in abundance, they are looking for you to be generous at this time. And so you may well want to join to your prayers and the family's those of the Carmelites, the Grey Sisters, our simple Madeleine, Father Denis, one of the holiest priests alive, as well as of Father Durand. If you happen to be writing to our aunt in the convent, get her to furnish her share too. In putting you to this trouble, you are doing it for me, as I will get it all back when my turn comes around and one thing is certain, I can never have too many intercessors with God lined up in advance for that awesome though still future moment when my wretched person, despite my unworthiness, my very great unworthiness, will be clothed with the priesthood of Jesus Christ. The closer I get

¹² Copy: Rey, I, 114-115; Rambert I, 80; Yenveux V, 130, VI, 37. The extracts from Yenveux and Rambert differ in some words from Rey.

¹³ Mrs. de Mazenod knew Charles de Janson, a native of Aix, and Joseph Szadurski who during the summer had travelled with Eugene to Aix from Paris: cf. Pierlorz, in *Etudes Oblates* 28 (1969) 248-253.

to that moment, the more I am tempted to postpone it, certainly not for want of desire, as it is the goal of my desires, but because the closer the mantle of light comes, the more I see in the brilliance of its rays the disproportion there is and the deformity of the person who is to be clothed in it ...

I take the liberty of asking you to consider, when you are making a visit to the Enclos¹⁴, having some plane trees planted there. You know it is the hermitage I have decided to live in and you would be upset if I were to be deprived of the shade I so long for in the summer heat. I would rather have one tree that affords me shade from the sun than twenty pear trees as I can always buy pears or even do without them without giving it a moment's thought, but you cannot buy shade nor endure the summer heat without a great deal of discomfort ...

75. [To his grandmother Joannis]¹⁵.

Greetings for her feast-day. Importance of frequent communion.

Paris, December 3, 1810.

Whether or not you are in Aix, my dear and darling mama, I really must write you a few lines. This idea came to me on the beautiful day of your feast, for which I am sending you my most tender and heartfelt greetings, at the feet of Our Lord, whom I have just received for your intention. You can easily guess what my prayer was at that rich moment when our good Master rests in our souls and listens to our prayers and is eager to fulfil them. How blind we are, to have there with us the well-spring of all consolation and to persist in our refusal to approach it and draw water. Come to me, cries out the Bridegroom continually, come to me all you who suffer life's woes and undergo afflictions, and I will give you rest. My greatest desire is to be with the children of men. My only reason for remaining on earth after my glorious Ascension was simply to be able to give each one of them the means of drowning in my living waters the fiery ardours life's painful journey brings. Come, come, I am the bread of life, I am the strength of the weak, the stay of all. Woe to him who refuses my tender invitation, for whoever does not eat of my flesh will not have life in him.

¹⁴ A property belonging to Mrs. de Mazenod and then situated some kilometres outside the town.

¹⁵ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB I-6.

I am not giving you a sermon; its just the feelings the Saviour hidden beneath the eucharistic species inspired me to share with you on St. Catherine's day, when I asked him through his infinite merits to help you, and fill you with strength, courage, resignation, love for his Sacrament. His answer was that every one of these graces is at your disposal, it was up to you to open yourself to their riches, but you had to go and draw them from the well by frequent participation in the body of O.L., the only and abundant fountain, which has this special quality that it flows but drop by drop for those who stand afar off while it abounds and overflows for those who have an insatiable thirst for its waters. What a mistake to believe that to dispose oneself worthily for frequent participation of that kind, one must shut oneself up in inaccessible solitude and leave to others the trouble of looking after one's worldly affairs. The early Christians, who got their instruction from the very mouth of the Lord and the Apostles, did not think that way, they received communion every day in spite of their occupations and the small failings St. Paul and the Fathers reproached them with, another mistake people today only too frequently fall into, namely, to imagine that one has to be perfect to receive communion often. We will not be perfect until we get to heaven; and the one and only way to come anywhere close to it here below is to receive communion often. That is the doctrine of the holy Council of Trent which teaches that this divine Sacrament is a remedy to heal us of our daily failings. So let us listen to the Church and pay no heed to the importunate clamouring of the sectarians of these latter days who say we must be satisfied with just saying our prayers. Let us go as often as we can to the sacrament where our Lord's love spent itself on our behalf. Let us recall his command; let us thank him a thousand and a thousand times for giving it to us. May the sight of him beneath the species of bread bring us to the knowledge that it is frequent nourishment that this symbol calls for from us, that our soul to sustain itself needs to return there often, as our body so as not to lose its strength does not satisfy itself with eating just once in a while. Finally, let us make no mistake that in denying ourselves very frequent reception of communion we are of our own free will depriving ourselves of an infinite number of graces which are very necessary for us, and storing up for ourselves last-minute regrets, and a prolonging of the pains of purgatory, and a very considerable diminution of heavenly glory.

So there, darling and most dear mama, you have the bouquet God in his goodness has inspired me to offer you for your feast-day in my two-fold role as your grandchild and minister of the Church specially commissioned in virtue of my orders to work for the glory of Jesus Christ and the accomplishment of his wonderful designs in the sacrament of the

Eucharist, and further commissioned as a deacon most specially for the care of widows, and what widow is dearer to me than my tender and darling mother, for whom I would willingly give my life, and whose heavenly glory and earthly happiness I long to see growing in proportion to the love I bear her. I pray the Lord that my words may be efficacious and bring about such great good, and that on my return I may have the happiness of giving you the precious pledge of Our Saviour's love at least twice in the month. As we wait for that happy moment, please pray a lot to the good Lord for me. Receive communion for me often. And give me your love as I give you that of the tenderest of sons.

76. [To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix]¹⁶.

Mrs. de Mazenod should not follow the Jansenist principles of Roze-Joannis.

[Paris], December 14, 1810.

... I thought it would make you happy if I gave you my usual seasonal gift: I am having the ordo for saying the divine office sent on to you. Don't let the sight of His Eminence Cardinal Maury's coat of arms on the frontispiece upset you¹⁷. His Eminence seems to have thought his dignity called for having his arms printed in that manner; that does not make him Archbishop of Paris, and indeed he only considers himself to be vicar-general to the Chapter; which is just as well if he does not want to cease being a Catholic. Even so in my opinion it would have been more canonical to have left on the Chapter's arms, however it is hardly for us to be scrupulous about formalities when one does not think they are essential ...

I am praying hard for God to open my uncle's eyes¹⁸ and show him the dreadful precipice at the edge of which he is standing, or to be more

¹⁶ Copy, Rambert I, 83-84, Rey I, 115.

¹⁷ Cardinal Maury had been named as Archbishop of Paris by Napoleon. The Pope did not recognize this appointment.

¹⁸ Roze-Joannis for his part continued to warn Mrs. de Mazenod about Eugene's principles. On February 7, 1810, he had written: "How nice to see Eugene bursting with joy. I am really happy for him. But there are great dangers in the state of life he has chosen and God would want him to know and avoid them ... Poor Eugene, he is no fool, far from it, but he goes around blindfolded whenever there is something directly or indirectly involving the Jesuits ..."

On August 3 he added: "Dear cousin, I wish you every happiness on your son's arrival. He will get a warm welcome from me, for I both love and esteem him highly, and he deserves to be regarded in this way. We argue a little perhaps but I hope without going outside the bounds of Christian charity. A legitimate suspicion hangs over his views in so far as he has consistently refused to read the authors on whom I base mine while I for my part have had the patience to read the arguments against. Is it pardonable, this wilful closing of one's eyes to the light?" Mrs. de Mazenod must have had Eugene's letter of December 14, 1810, read to her cousin as Roze-Joannis delivers an even harsher verdict on January 13, 1811.

accurate into what an abyss he had already tumbled; but God gives his grace only to the humble, say the words of Scripture, and nobody can be said to be that who substitutes his private judgment for that of the Church. As to your own position, don't ever forget that it is certainly not from him you are to receive the Church's true doctrine; make an act of faith and submission in and for everything to the decision of holy Mother Church, and, not being capable of judging what it is none of your business to judge, be on your guard against proud men who lack all docility and, although they have not been missioned and are brazen as only heretics can be, set themselves up as teachers and dare to dogmatize, striving, by a deceptive show of external regularity, that can be so easily exposed if one takes the trouble to look closely, to swell the numbers of a wretched sect with its back to the wall, and has barely survived a whole heap of Church anathemas. We are not talking here about matters of simple opinion, eternal salvation is at stake; so put far away from you every principle that would tend to distance you from the faith; one can love heretics and at the same time detest their errors.

So that is what you must do; I use such language in the name of the Church whose minister I am, but with all concern and tenderness too as your very affectionate son. Let us love Jesus, and his Church, let us believe all she teaches and condemn all she anathematizes, as she alone is infallible in her decisions. Let us pray sincerely for those led astray by pride, but let us not allow our fondness for their persons to go so far as to include their errors, which we must detest with all our strength if we wish to dwell in the barque of Peter, which is the only one that has Jesus Christ as pilot and so is the only one that can lead us to the harbour of salvation.

With heartfelt and affectionate greetings.

Eugene

77. Spiritual Conference¹⁹.

Meditation on the mystery of the Incarnation. God's mercy towards Eugene. Gratitude to God for keeping the Sulpician presence at the seminary.

[Paris, December 31, 1810]²⁰.

Lay aside, O Israel, your mourning, cried out one of the Prophets as, rapt in divine inspiration, he saw the future present before his every eyes. Burst asunder and cast aside, O Jerusalem, the chains that still bear witness to your shameful slavery. Rise up, O Sion, and look to the East. Almighty God would have you clothed anew with his justice, he wants to ring your brow with an immortal crown ... The splendour of his glory is to issue from your bosom, and his rays, shining out to the darkest corners of the least known parts of the inhabited world, will draw on you forever the attentive gaze of astounded nations jealous of your glory.

Exue te Jerusalem, etc. Deus enim ostendet splendorem suum in te omni qui sub coelo est [Bar. 5,1.3].

For the divine Word has been seen on earth and has spoken with men: *in terris visus est, et cum hominibus conversatus est* [Bar, 3, 38].

This prodigy, foretold long ago by the inspired son of Nerias to the children of Israel as they sat by the waters of Babylon and despaired of ever being freed, this prodigy we have seen, it has come to pass among us.

Yes, the word of life, which was there from the beginning, we have heard it, we have seen it with our own eyes, we have felt it with our hands, for life itself was made visible, we have seen it and bear testimony ... *vidimus et testamur ... vita quae erat apud Patrem apparuit nobis ...* [I John 1, 2.3].

But who could recognize him beneath these rags with which poverty has clothed his delicate limbs? Is it credible, is it even conceivable that wisdom, goodness, justice, infinite grandeur could mean to glorify itself once and or all in such a child?

¹⁹ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, DM V-1. We possess two versions of this conference. The first and longer one appears to be a draft of the final text published here and which cuts short some passages, fills out others and adds a new section concerning circumcision.

²⁰ This text bears no date. The context points to December 31, 1810. December 31: "Eight days have gone by since Christmas"; "last moments of a year so fruitful." 1810: allusion to the Directors who have recently avoided the suppression of the Sulpicians and their own dismissal from the seminary.

There speaks human wisdom, but St. Paul replies that what is weak in God is stronger than all men put together, that what does not seem worthy of divine wisdom is wiser than all human wisdom combined.

A Liberator was promised, we were to await one worthy of God and suited to our needs. Behold this Liberator, he has appeared as was foretold, and as he was to be. His humble and obscure origins reveal him rather than conceal him. Destined to be King of a new order, his greatness had to be of a new kind. He who by his death was to destroy cupidity's reign, had from the first moment of his existence to despise pomp and false show.

He must needs be at once both God and man, reunite in his person both God who was offended and human nature that had given offence, that man made strong in Jesus Christ would have the wherewithal to fully satisfy divine justice, and that God would there find an act of reparation superior to the offence and reconciliation would be complete.

Only then could mercy and truth meet, justice and peace reunited and reconciled embrace. *Misericordia et Veritas obviaverunt sibi, justitia et pax osculatae sunt* [Ps. 84,11]. Such is the secret and mystery of the deep humiliation of J.C. in his birth.

But it is not enough for the emptied heart of this innocent victim. Eight days have scarce gone by since the lamb immolated from the beginning opened his eyes to the light of day: the tears of Jesus for which man's ingratitude much more than the rigour of the hoar-frost are responsible flow once again, as this child, saviour from the first moment of his conception, thirsts for suffering, and as a prelude to the lengthy martyrdom and bloody sacrifice he had decided to offer his Father, resolves to prove to the rebels he has come to ransom the measure of his love for them.

In fact we see Jesus, author and only end of the Law, submitting himself to one of its most humiliating practices, freely identifying with sinners, although he is the Saint of Saints, and take upon himself by circumcision the degrading mark and pain of sin. He assumes all the heavy obligations imposed by this ceremony, he submits his tender and innocent flesh to the sharp knife which surely softened its edge when it touched so pure a flesh. He feels its vivid pains and offers to his Father the blood that flows as a first-fruit of all he will one day pour out for our salvation.

Who could have thought it on seeing the King of Heaven consubstantial with God his Father, the Holy One, the Just, the Omnipotent, direct

his steps towards the Temple, who could have guessed his intention?²¹ It would have been more natural to believe that resolved at last to substitute the reality for the figure, God was about to take his seat visibly in his Temple, that he was about to set up his throne at the very centre of the Sanctuary, use as his footstool that ark (an anachronism one may believe permissible) so revered until then, and deem scarcely worthy of serving as ornaments of his throne those privileged cherubim, sole witnesses for more than²² years of the mysterious supplications of the High Priests. We would have expected to see him crown his brow brighter than the halo (with a diadem) of glory and majesty; surround himself with countless legions of heavenly spirits ever ready to execute his orders; summon to his feet all earth's peoples and inaugurate at last the Kingdom so desired by the carnal Jewish nation.

But no, it is not towards the sanctuary that Jesus directs his steps. See him go towards that obscure court situated in the remotest part of the Temple and set aside for sinners come to receive the imprint of their guilty origin. What, my Saviour! What then was your crime! Let all our wonder cease, he takes upon himself all the iniquities of men (of his people) ... Can one reflect on this prodigy of our God's goodness and not be ravished with admiration and cry out with St. Paul in transports of just gratitude: Here in all truth is the great mystery of the excessive love of the Son of God: *Magnum est pietatis Sacramentum* [I Tim. 3, 16].

But, my God, are your priceless gifts sufficiently acknowledged by simply giving expression to feelings of sterile admiration? Is that the only fruit I am to derive from meditating on the mystery of your self-abasement? No, my Saviour, you call me too to spur myself to imitate the virtues of which you came on earth to give a heroic example. Alas, I have barely begun to follow in your footsteps, footsteps stained with your precious Blood that you poured out for love of me. But that is over: dixi; from now on with the aid of your powerful arm I wish to conform my behaviour in all respects to yours. Support my tottering steps as I make this journey that all things conspire to urge me to pursue with courage. The great examples of your humility, penitence, infinite love would be more than enough to hasten me on my journey. When on top of this I think of all you have done for me personally, my heart feels moved to

²¹ Eugene writes in the margin: "The reasoning here rests on the supposition that Our Saviour was circumcised in the Temple, something that does not seem in fact to be very likely."

²² The text omits a word here.

make reparation for my past infidelities. What generosity on one side, what ingratitude on the other! It really seems that while I am by nature sensitive to the point of excess and grateful to anyone who shows me the least sign of love, to you alone I show myself ungrateful and take your gifts for granted, precisely because you like to shower them on me without limit!

If it is true that up to now I have been lacking in fulfilling the sacred duty of gratitude that I owe to you for so many reasons, may it no longer be so in the future. No, I protest my gratitude and speak out among my brothers who as witnesses of some part of what my God has given me are still awaiting perhaps the example that these gifts (graces) require of me. Yes, I will speak out before the last moments of a year so rich in grace run out and go their way to be lost and buried in the vast abyss of passed centuries. My God's mercies are infinite, let us praise, publish these gifts, for if it is good to hide the secrets of the King, in the words of Scripture, it is honourable, no rather it is a duty to reveal and publish the works of God: *Opera Dei revelare et confiteri honorificum est.*

But how can I with so little space of time at my disposal narrate so many marvels? Frustrated, I see myself constrained to hold in containment what it seems my heart cannot refrain from pouring out. O God, you read the most secret recesses of this heart, you see at a glance with what feelings it is moved when it recalls that happy moment when you deigned to grant that it make you for ever the irrevocable offering of its faith. You did not hesitate, generous Master, to give it entrance to the Holy of Holies, what am I saying! You lifted for it the impenetrable veil that hides from profane eyes the most sacred mysteries, and from that moment, initiated by the effusion of your sanctifying Spirit into the levitical degree, to that high and eminent dignity that sees nothing higher than itself, if it be not the divine priesthood of the priests of the Most High, the power was granted me to touch without temerity with my suppliant hand the depository ark of the precious pledge of the love of God for men.

Tell it abroad, you Levites, who have like me experienced it, with what swiftness the fire which consumes on this altar the stainless victim communicates itself to your heart, warms it and revives it when, deputed to exercise your sublime ministry, you approach with faith and humility to uncover the sacred fire whose flames the priest stands ready to spread. O prodigy, o love!

But will I overlook on a day consecrated to gratitude what thanksgiving we owe the Lord, all of us who form in this haven the happy family of

the Venerable Olier. This peaceful retreat was threatened with the greatest of evils; our hearts were bruised; they cried out to God, and the Lord who is always close to the one who calls upon him heard the prayer of the desolate children who asked for the return of their tender Mothers.

It was granted us that we might once more place ourselves under their protecting wings, warm ourselves again on their bosom, and suck long draughts of the milk of knowledge and piety which flow there in such abundance. You who consecrate to our instruction your talents and virtues, the knowledge of which you reveal in the shadows of humility for those who could reward it here below; receive then on this day the tribute of our hearts; yes, allow our grateful hearts to pour themselves for an instant into yours. Cherished and tenderly loved Fathers, live on in happiness, may your long and serene days pour out benign influences on a host of these levitical generations that succeed one another beneath your eyes. And as a way of expressing our good wishes that might give you deep satisfaction in the goodness of your souls, may we imitate our virtues, may we profit from your example. And may the sovereign Rewarder of all good, seeing what you pour out on us, repay abundantly the debt that we glory in having incurred, but which we can never discharge ourselves.

78. [To his sister Eugenie, in Aix]²³.

By her good example Eugenie will ensure Nathalie's purity and virtue. Fidelity to graces received leads to more being offered. Example of the soldier who receives the sacraments frequently and remains faithful to all his Christian obligations. Moral corruption especially at Carnival time; one can keep oneself free of it by following Jesus Christ and his cross. The Lord asks more of Eugenie because she has received more graces. Above all, she must never go to masked balls. How to remain united to God while in the world; importance of the Eucharist.

L.J.C.

Paris, February 9, 1811.

... Let's talk especially about what interests you most and, I have to confess, is very close to my heart too, namely Nathalie. I know very well that I love her so much for the simple reason that she is yours, for really a child at that age is not all that attractive in itself; the plain truth is that if

²³ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the part omitted, at the beginning and ending of this letter, Eugene complains that his sister does not write often enough, although he understands she is busy with her daughter Nathalie.

she was your neighbour's child or anybody else's at all, charming creature though she is, I would not give her another thought, but it is my darling Eugenie's blood that flows in her veins; that's all it takes for me to love her with all my heart. So I never write to mama without asking after how she is getting on, etc. May God grant the prayers I say every day that he will keep her soul in that state of purity he restored it to through baptism. Her mother's good example will be the best and most assured way to obtain this end. What happiness for a mother when she can console herself with the thought that her children can find a surer path to virtue by following what they see her doing than by what she merely says! Courage, dear Eugenie, don't let yourself be contaminated by your inevitable contact with the world, remember what I have several times told you in my letters; it depended only on you to oblige me to elaborate on these thoughts. If I dared, I would tell you about a young soldier²⁴, who lacks nothing that is needed to immerse himself completely in the world and even so keeps his virtue intact in the barracks as if he were in solitude, which persuades me that, notwithstanding my inadequacy and lack of virtue, the Lord even so looks with favour on the very vivid desire I have to see him served in all life's circumstances and imparts some force to my words. But if this young man can affirm their utility, why can't they be of some use to my sister? My sins are the first reason, but doesn't she have some responsibility too? Anyway, this young man, despite all manner of persecutions he has to endure at the hands of his comrades, never ever enters a theatre and would rather be reduced to the ranks²⁵ than dance with persons of the opposite sex. He is completely open about observing the Church's rules on abstinence and fulfilling all his other duties and the only thing he can reproach himself for - judge for yourself what a fine Christian he is - is that his exemplary conduct earns him the admiration of the tiny number who are able to appreciate it. How can one explain these marvels in the midst of the licence of barrack-room life? Fidelity to grace. It is certain, of faith even, that cooperation with one of God's graces will attract others from his beneficent hand. It is this fidelity to grace that leads him assiduously to frequent the sacraments. There you have the whole solution to the mystery. It is only by very frequent participation in the sacraments that the early Christians kept themselves at that high point of

²⁴ He is referring no doubt to his friend Emmanuel Gaultier de Claubry, cf. *supra*, letters dated November 1805 and December 23, 1807.

²⁵ Eugene's writing is bad here. The Editor conjectures the meaning given in the text.

heroic virtue that has since earned them the admiration of every age. If we want to imitate them, as we ought to strive to do, we will succeed only by using the same means and they will work as infallibly for us as they did for them.

Carnival time is back again, an abomination when Christians give free rein to their hearts' corruption, and seem to glory in the fact that they are much more like pagans than followers of a Leader like our Saviour Jesus Christ. Just because the miserable slaves of Satan lose their heads, must the tiny number of disciples of the Gospel let themselves be dragged along with the current? By no means, and we have too many helps at hand to keep us from contagion to have any excuse. Let us take a look now and again at our crucifix; we will find in our divine Model's wounds the answer to all our miserable excuses. It is in this faithful mirror that we will discern what he will tolerate and what he forbids. Let us open our hearts to his, listen to his voice, let's not stupefy ourselves and then we'll see if all the petty reasonings of the world's followers don't collapse and dissolve before a single one of the rays of light that emanate from Our Lord when we have recourse to him in silence and meditation.

It won't surprise you that I start my letter with these great truths, for you know I love you too much to flatter you, and so I take good care to refrain from patting you on the back for the good you do, that's done by many others. As for myself I am continually conscious that while the world, I mean the Christian world, praises us for the good we do, God will condemn us for what we have not done. We mustn't delude ourselves, we have to fulfil all our duties; don't forget our duties are relative to the graces God has given us and still is giving us, there where he has placed us, in the light of what he expects of us for his glory. For example: someone else who did the good you do would perhaps be going enough, while God is asking something more of you. Why? Because he has showered his gifts on you since your infancy, shown you his signal favour on a number of occasions and in particular at the most decisive moment of your life, because he wanted you to serve as an example for all the persons in whom he would inspire thereafter the holy desire to work out their salvation in the world. If you weaken and are satisfied to follow the broad way by which it is so difficult to get to heaven, which is yet the one and only end to which we must tend, you are bringing about the failure by your fault of all the merciful plans that God has for yourself and for the good of others too, perhaps, and you put yourself in a state of ingratitude towards God which is indubitably a very dangerous one for your soul. What might I not add if I were able to write all that God in his goodness places in my heart,

but I have to stop for lack of time. Even so, if I may once again beseech you not to let yourself be seduced and go and prostitute the sacred character of Christian in the horrid dens, cesspits for all manner of filth, called “masked balls”; it makes no difference that you wear no mask yourself, that you stay away from the ballroom and stay in a box, you have to stay away altogether. I could write a book on this topic, please just don’t set foot there. While one should not put the presentation of a play like “Joseph” on the same plane as all the others, I would give ten years of my life if it meant you had enough spirit of mortification in you to offer the Lord this small privation of something that seen under a certain point of view has a number of unwholesome aspects. And so — another prayer — please do not yield this year.

Dear God! when will we finally grasp the value of the sacrifices we make for God? At the moment of death, the moment of death! Never let yourself be persuaded to dance, that is important; when you are obliged to be present at a ball, or in other rowdy gatherings, bring often to mind God’s presence, a precious practice you cannot be too familiar with; and make use too of the other practices I have given you in the past: death, the moment of the point of death, judgment, hell; according to what time it is, take yourself off in spirit and keep company with saintly people praising and blessing the holy Name of God, the Carmelites between 9 and 11, between 11 and 2 the Religious who in various places still have the happiness of being able to sing the Lord’s praises at the hours prescribed by their rule; from 2 to 4 to La Trappe; at 4, that’s the time at the seminary we begin to offer the stainless Victim who immolates himself for our sins. When one has faith and even a tiny modicum of love of God, it is easy to find ways of not losing sight for too long of one’s well-beloved. In this way one will find we have acquired a treasury of merits right there where unhappily every day others are losing their souls. But the infallible way to conserve ourselves in the world, with no fear of its blows, is going often to the sacraments. There you have the true and specific remedy for all the poisons, the corruption of the world lays down for us; to keep your distance from the sacraments and to claim to serve God in the middle of the world’s dangers is to want the impossible. In the summer heat and when the labour of harvesting is at its heaviest, the farmer needs to take frequent nourishment to renew his strength, so we see the harvesters eating five or six meals a day. Poor souls in the world are engaged in a continual and forced labour to fight and keep themselves in God’s grace. Without question their strength will soon be exhausted if we don’t pay strict attention and have them draw fresh strength by participation in Him who said:

My body is a bread of life; he who does not eat of this bread will die. Reflect seriously on all this and pray too for me ...

If you are sending me an answer, make it a long one. You don't have to write the whole letter the same day, but it would be useful for you to give some details on the dispositions in which you find yourself as to piety; it often happens that, while fulfilling very badly one's own duties, one gives excellent advice to others; that might be where I am. But if you profit from it, wouldn't that always be all the more a victory for you?

79. [To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix]²⁶.

His letter to Eugenie. Eugene has had to accept teaching adult catechism which he proposes to introduce one day in Aix.

L.J.C.

Paris, February 13, 1811.

... My first intention was to send Eugenie's [letter] with a passer-by but it turned out the person would be three weeks on the road so I decided to find a better way to get it there, especially as it contains some words of wisdom that would be out of date if the letter only arrived after Lent had started ...

February 14.

They have me back at teaching catechism again, and the major catechism at that, if you please, where the pupils are well-educated, very pious adults whom it is difficult to speak to without preparation. I held back as long as I could, but with so much good to be achieved it would not brook a refusal. If God is his goodness grants his Church a period of peace, we might eventually be able to establish something similar in our dear town of Aix, but for that to happen we have to be back in a state of normality and God knows if we will ever see the day. Affectionate greetings, dear mama, please pray for me, and ask for the prayers too of all the people who ask after me.

I am so happy that the Ordo was to your liking, that was really my intention ...

²⁶ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB I-7. A few paragraphs are omitted in which Eugene speaks about his health and says he is finding it difficult to get his letters delivered.

80. For mama²⁷.

Eugene will not be ordained priest this year, not for the reasons his mother suggests, but because he wants to prepare himself better for it.

L.J.C.

Paris, March 2, 1811

... For once I am getting down to it as if I had nothing else to do. I won't be satisfied with writing just to you, I'll write grandmama and Eugenie as well and continue so long as I have space left on my paper, although when I began I was quite decided just to write a few lines; but one can be forgiven for overstepping the mark when its to do with what one holds dearest. I am not going to repeat to you what I am telling grandmama about what you wrote on her behalf as well as your own. It does not look as if I will be ordained priest this year, you know I have always wanted to give myself a little bit more time to prepare for it, there are no other reasons for my delay; the reasons that make you want me to put it off have absolutely nothing to do with it. You know what St. Paul said about Christians and himself, that they have not received a spirit of fear; on the contrary when we received the diaconate the Spirit was given us *ad robur*, namely, to armour-plate us against every kind of fear and weakness. It is a tonic liqueur that was poured at that time into our souls and, provided we raise no obstacles by our sins, it must produce its effect, for it is not in vain that the Holy Spirit came down upon us. In any case, whether it be for this reason or that, so long as I am still deferring it for a while, that is all you want and you will be satisfied, unless some extraordinary reason that I cannot foresee, but of a completely overriding nature, makes me change my mind: but I repeat that it is more than likely, practically certain even, that I will let Easter and Trinity pass by without offering myself for ordination and I have decided even to say no when the proposal is put to me at the usual time. I am bringing my letter to a hasty conclusion because someone is coming to collect it and it has to be ready

²⁷ Orig.: Postulation Archives, FB I-7. We omit the first two pages of this letter in which Eugene thanks his mother for the provisions sent to the seminary bursar. He also speaks of plans to improve the value of the land at St. Laurent.

when he comes. With my most affectionate greetings. I want you all to take care of your health, and be prudent in Lent and don't let it make you ill.

81. To Mrs. de Boisgelin, née Mazenod²⁸.

Retreat given in the Church of St. Sulpice during the Carnival. Eugene gives meditation on the Lord's lovable qualities. The pleasure he feels in serving God and doing penance in reparation for the sins of the world.

L.J.C.

Paris, March 3, 1811

Although I haven't yet received any answer to my long epistle, dated I don't know what, I can't let a good cleric go off to Aix without writing a few lines for my darling Eugenie. I am impatient, dear child, for your news, and I will be thrilled to get it from your own hand; tell me about your wonderful self, your husband, daughter, health, piety, how you spent the Carnival, what you are going to do in Lent, in a word share all your concerns with me as if they were my own.

If you followed my advice on how to get through Carnival time in a holy way, even though you may have had to attend some noisy gatherings and balls, you may well have earned more merit than myself who have perhaps done badly the excellent things that I was busy with in the final days of that wretched time that is given over to the devil.

However, it is a real consolation to think of 7 or 800 children of all ages, for we thus designate even people 30 years old, and a large number of relatives, spending Carnival Sunday, Monday and Tuesday doing a retreat that took up each day six or seven hours of their time. I was really happy to give them a meditation of three quarters of an hour on O.L.'s lovable qualities to bring them to a sense of how advantageous it is to follow faithfully such a good Master rather than the detestable Satan who flatters us to bring about our perdition. This edifying assembly was so well disposed, their hearts were so moved to love Him who has acquired so many rights to our gratitude and love, that everyone's tears flowed freely; I was the only one, I say it to my shame, to remain unmoved and my heart remained cold even while my spirit was penetrated with what my mouth was saying.

²⁸ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin.

During the various exercises of this retreat I thought of you from time to time, and when we were praying to the Lord to graciously accept our humble prayers in reparation for all the outrages done to him by his ungrateful children, I asked him to hear the intentions you would bring him for your part and to really fill you with his divine Presence so that none of this world's vanities and illusions would have an ill effect on you.

What a pleasure it is to serve the good God! I was happier eating my tough piece of beef than all the fancy foods people stuff themselves with in the world. The solitude of the seminary was sweeter to me than the most melodious of concerts; and the time I spent on the retreat was a happiness I cannot put into words, for I felt as if we were performing the office of angels of peace rescuing from the devil's lairs a host of souls who would perhaps have committed a large number of faults had they to depend on no one but themselves or been pervaded by seductive dissipation in the days leading up to Lent. And that expiatory *Miserere* sung in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament exposed in our chapel, what did it not say to the heart? One offers oneself at that moment as victims in reparation for so many crimes, one unites oneself to all that is holy in heaven, on earth and in purgatory. It feels as if one is crowding around the good, so-offended Jesus to alleviate his pain, which one feels oneself in a very vivid way. It is only on these occasions one feels the whole value of being a Christian. After that one is wholly disposed for the next day's liturgy, and one enters effortlessly into the Church's way of seeing things as she covers her head with ashes. Goodbye. Affectionate greetings from the heart. Best wishes to everyone. Write me a long letter. Goodbye.

82. For my darling grandmama²⁹.

Advice on the Lenten fast. Gratitude to his grandmother for paying his seminary fees. Eugene will not be ordained priest this year.

L.J.C.

Paris, March 3, 1811.

A few lines too for our darling mama. Although I'm only going to tell her something she has known for a long time now, namely that I love her with all my heart, it will be enough to satisfy my heart.

We have come once again to the time of year when I become worried about you. Lent always leaves you exhausted, and you would get through

²⁹ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB I-6.

it a lot more easily if only you didn't refuse some relaxation of the rules that you are *entitled* to. I speak as a theologian who knows what he is talking about. You need not hesitate to take a hot drink in the morning, even if it's only a *chichera*, what you call a *quiquere* of coffee or tea. You know your confessor advised this, and I am telling you his decision was not an unstudied one. Trust me; nobody accuses me of being lax. But I would have to be a complete idiot to give you any other decision than the one I have just said. More's the pity my letter will reach you after Lent has begun and you will already have had time to suffer a lot from the phlegm that the mouthful of coffee you take in the morning brings up, and from the wind that that liquid that suits your stomach so well gets rid of.

I am so used now to your acts of generosity, and my feeling of gratitude is so habitual, that there is no need for me to keep on saying "thank you" on every occasion. However, although you know the extent to which you can count on me, as I have the opportunity of writing, I thank you once again for the money you kindly had sent on. I have just received from Mr. Gilbert your half-yearly amount; and the only reason I haven't sent the statement on sooner is to avoid the postage expenses, as I no longer have the facility of writing and using the minister's bag, since orders from higher-up have absolutely forbidden it.

I have no problem in going along with the wishes you outline, although my reason for doing so is not the reason behind your request. I am very much inclined to postpone priestly ordination, not out of any fear of possible difficulties that may arise in a diocese shorn of its pastor, but because I am struck by my unworthiness for so sublime a ministry, and believe I can't prepare myself too much so as to bring to the priesthood the best dispositions I possibly can. Moreover, in a matter of such high importance, the only course to take is to disclose one's desires and leave the rest to Providence as manifested in our director, who holds in our regard the place of God. However, I would venture to think that no-one is going to press me to get ordained priest this year. So you can rest easy and keep up your prayers for God to grant me all the graces I need both for myself and for others.

As always happens when I sit down to write you a few lines, I end up filling the page. However, finish I must, with my affectionate greetings. There's no need for you to reply; it tires you and all I ask is for you to take care of your health ...

83. To Mrs. de Mazenod, rue Papassaudy, n.21, near Place St. Honoré, in Aix³⁰.

Eugene is going to wait until he has finished his theology before he is ordained. He is not doing this out of fear of political developments, but so as to prepare himself better with a long retreat. It is unjust of Roze-Joannis to accuse him of following blindly the advice of his directors.

L.J.C.

March 31, 1811

I have already written you several times, dear mother, that it has never been my intention to receive the priesthood this year and since this seems to give you pleasure, I will repeat this assurance yet again. Several reasons incline me to postpone receiving this sublime order, the first one being my lack of virtue which is nowhere near the standard required for this awesome ministry; 2° there is the desire I have always had to prepare myself for the priesthood with a retreat worthy of the name, I mean spending 30 to 40 days concentrating completely on my interior life to get to know my needs thoroughly, cut off what is harmful to me, acquire what I lack; in a word, with God's help to establish the work of my sanctification on solid and unshakeable foundations, root out anything that impedes God's action in my soul, to make myself fit in a word to sanctify others by working at my own salvation. Only in the most absolute of retreats can all these things begin to come together, God rarely speaks amidst the worries of the world or any other activity that absorbs our attention. So even studying, although it is very much a part of God's plan, is even so an obstacle to that perfect knowledge of oneself that can only come in recollection without any distractions. However, during the course of my theology, it would be impossible for me even to dream of carrying out this plan I have always had in mind because of the need I see for it; and so there is just one way left to me, namely, postpone receiving the priesthood until after my theology studies are entirely over. Then, with my studies behind me, I can spend my time at prayer, etc., and when the time fixed for my elevation to this sublime dignity that I so dread approaches, slipping quietly away, I will go and have a month's stay in the country in our delightful countryside at Issy and not show my face until the moment of ordination. That is what I have always had in mind. So I have no intention of

³⁰ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. We omit the end of the letter in which Eugene says the Bursar has received the food-stuffs from Aix and he himself is attending to some commissions for Eugénie.

deceiving you, and you are quite wrong to get alarmed. So I say it again, I will not be ordained priest this year. But I can't refrain from pointing out that those people who are showing such concern for my welfare do not know me at all if they can imagine that any other reason at all could hold me back for so much as fifteen minutes. I would be really unworthy of the sacramental character I bear if I allowed myself to be influenced for a single moment by any fear other than that of my very great unworthiness. If I had been so cowardly as to listen for a single instant to the least thought coloured by pusillanimity, it is not just for a matter of a few months I would have postponed my going forward to the priesthood; on my life, there would have been no consecration with the holy oil for hands so weak as to rely on human helps, and judging myself absolutely incapable of fulfilling the duties which already weigh in part on a deacon, I would have banished myself to the crowd of the pusillanimous, be they laity or non-laity to forget, amid their politic and scarcely Christian outcries, that I had even so received by the imposition of hands the spirit of strength and spiritual [vigour].

I understand the torments of a maternal heart which, listening a little too much to the feelings nature has engraved so deeply in her, forgets for a moment that they must be subordinate to what God's service and the salvation of souls requires, souls a single one of which is worth more than all the riches, honours and temporal goods whatsoever. A mother or a grandmother is one thing, but when people reputed to be pious dare to fill them full of vain fears and when among these officious friends one can include perhaps some priests, that is what upsets me! Does anybody believe in good faith that on entering the clerical state I had not foreseen what is now happening³¹?

I resume my letter after an interruption to get it finished and have it delivered, courtesy of a traveler. I add nothing to what I have already said although in all probability I would have had more to say if I had been able to continue, but this is enough, in the first place to set your heart at rest since I assure you that I have never had the intention of receiving the priesthood this year; in the second place so that you may inform those

³¹ We do not have the letter Eugene is replying to, but we know what Mrs. de Mazenod wanted. She would speak her mind again on August 13, as follows: grandma, seriously ill, "urged me yesterday to write and tell you not to receive the priesthood yet. The reason she gave me was the fear she had that those intending to enter the ministry were required to sign something and it would perhaps be awkward for them if they refused. This advice is very similar to that I gave you on behalf of people who had quite different views from those of the hermit [Roze-Joannis] which you mention in your letter ..."

people who have communicated their fears to you what the real reason is for my delay. Far from intimidating me, current events encourage me, and certainly they would have made me change my mind and not postpone any longer the reception of the priesthood which affords me my only opportunity of being able to be of service to the Church if, on the other hand, I were not convinced that I will be more useful still by delaying. They should know what will be all my life my only goal: the glory of God, being of use to my neighbour, service of the Church, here you have the answer to all the arguments that human prudence may put to me. Any other fear than that of failing to do one's duty is a monstrosity in a Christian, in a deacon I cannot find words to describe it. But that is enough of that and there would be too much to say about it all³².

It remains only for me to express my astonishment about a manner of speech you sometimes fall into: you seem to suppose I let myself be led, that I am one to be blindly impressed by others, etc. I have to confess that I would never have thought I would have this thrown at me. And if I had not seen with my own eyes the insolent expressions a certain person used in a letter which, to add insult to injury, he handed me to deliver, I would never have thought it possible someone could accuse me of a weakness of that kind. The very person whose unwitting tool you are could furnish an example to the contrary, since despite all the efforts of his eloquence and all his attempts to bring me over to his heretical views, I have steadfastly persevered in frankly resisting him on every occasion. I am so little inclined to let myself be impressed by others that I tend to the opposite extreme and frequently have to force myself to pause for reflection to maintain a just balance; it is an undeniable fact and if I sin it is much more through a natural tendency to bend others to my will than by being overly-inclined to accommodate myself to their views. Such is the judgment I am constrained to make on myself, such is the judgment of everyone who has known me up to the time the above-mentioned person saw fit to write the contrary in the most outrageous way. At the same time, if I hark back to that act, it isn't that I bear him any rancour, God forbid! I have forgiven him for that black deed and I renew my forgiveness from the bottom of my heart. It is only to let you understand a little the facts so you don't get worked up on the subject. Just remember what my poor grandfather, your father, said to you when I was an infant: *a queo picho es nest caractero leissali dire, vuoi aco vau mieou qu de ploura a de*

³² An illusion to the next national council and the difficulties experienced by the Pope and Bishops with Napoleon, cf. J. Leflon, *op. cit.*, Vol.I, p. 380-385.

caratero me fa plaisi. His judgment was sound, I have always kept a lot of temperament and once more, when I sin it is by excess and not by default ...

84. To Mrs. de Mazenod, isle 56, n.21, in Aix. Dep[artment] des Bouch[es]-du-Rhône³³.

Details of Mr. Emery's illness and death. Eugene looks after him. Admiration.

L.J.C.

Paris, May 2, 1811

Dear, darling mamma, if you have been reading the papers, you won't be surprised at my rather lengthy silence. At first I was putting off writing in expectation of a letter from you; and since the one dated April 18 arrived, we have in the house been taken up with some matters of so sad a nature that I have been quite unable to write.

When our venerable superior fell ill it was only natural that I should do what I could for him; and when we suffered the grave misfortune of losing him, and the principal funeral arrangements were confided to me, if I were to acquit myself worthily of this painful task I had no time for anything else.

To give you some idea of who Mr. Emery was, I would have to speak with the voice of all men, even those with little attachment to religion.

His death is the greatest calamity that could afflict the Church in the current situation. He was the only one able to bond people together in unity, the only man who on account of his outstanding merits could impose it on all parties. The Emperor himself fell silent in his presence, so great was the ascendancy of his enlightenment and virtues.

He was one of those strong souls, so rare in our days. Incapable of betraying his duty, unshakeable in his principles, he yet had the talent of conciliation to a supreme degree. He was in a word the man the Church really needed. But the Lord who likes to show that it is in Him alone that we must place our trust, has just taken from us this last source of strength. May his holy will be accomplished in everything.

Throughout my life I will never forget the examples of strength and truly priestly vigour that he gave us right up to the last moment. He did

³³ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB I-7. In the two last pages that are omitted, Eugene describes the funeral ceremony in the seminary chapel and the procession to the chapel of Loretto in the country house at Issy where the body lies.

not yield until the moment that death, which already circulated in his veins, had laid him low. Two days before his demise, he still wanted to get up to say holy Mass, despite the acute illness that oppressed him; with unbelievable pain he got as far as the altar, and he would have died at the altar had not his director arrived just in time to force him to stay in bed. These were the last efforts of an eminently generous soul. Scarcely had he returned to his bed than he fell into that state of weakness that is the precursor of death. He did not move again from his place and he lost the power of speech a few hours later, when he had received the last sacraments. It was Sunday that he breathed up his spirit to the Creator.

I had been one of the first to notice his illness on the Tuesday morning, and perhaps I was the first to become alarmed over his condition. I ran to the doctors, as in an emergency it is not wise to rely on the servants. The good superior, thinking that his illness was nothing but overwork, had in the interval sent for a carriage with the intention of taking a 24 hour break in the country. The doctor I brought just managed to feel his pulse as he crossed the courtyard to get into the carriage. I was in a state of alarm. I conveyed this to my other superiors who begged me to go and spend the night in the country, together with the bursar. As my fears grew, when I arrived at Issy I did not want to go to bed, though the bursar urged me to do so. I spent the night in the library next to the sick man's room, without his knowledge. I was afraid he would be taken suddenly.

The next day, Wednesday, he wanted to get up, despite his very great weakness. It was impossible to stop him saying his office; and he would not be denied saying holy Mass. He dragged himself to the chapel. It was a heart-rending sight to see a venerable old man, almost 80, unable to put one foot in front of the other, supported by two people, making his way to the altar to offer the sacrifice of his life to the Lamb who would immolate himself through failing hands. I had the happiness to serve that last Mass. What feelings did I not experience at the sight of this holy priest, almost at the point of his agony, celebrating the holy mysteries with a redoubled faith and love that have left really deep marks in my heart. He suffered enormously getting through it, only his courage gave him enough strength to make it to the end. His condition deteriorated after the Mass. He was brought back to Paris and the prognosis of the four doctors summoned for consultation was that he was on the point of death ...

85. [Retreat], as deacon³⁴.

Decrease in fervour and observance, repugnance for bodily mortifications. Resolutions: more mortification and recollection. He invokes the aid of saintly deacons.

May [1811].

On my retreat day in May, I noted in myself a marked decrease in fervour, observance, etc. I reflected on this disorder that was leading me backwards rather than forwards; to my surprise I noticed that I had allowed myself to be overcome by an invincible repugnance for bodily mortifications. I could not hide from myself the fact that the only fasting I was doing was on Fridays, a burden that still seemed quite heavy to me in my excessive laxity. No more use of disc[ipline], nor of the ch[ain].

The result of my reflections on my need to renew myself in the spirit of fervour and observance, etc., led to the following resolutions:

1. I will make it a point of duty to fulfil with the utmost scrupulosity every point in the rule and the special articles of my own program. I will submit myself to this laborious duty, in view of pleasing God by doing his holy will, and as penance for my sins.

2. I will start getting up again before prayers, to have enough time to attend to various things I have for some time neglected. All the worse for me if I am late going to bed.

3. I will set aside anything that has been a source of distraction from study, since the time I have only been getting up at the same time as the community.

4. I will resume the holy usage of the chain three times a week. Have I become more holy, that I am entitled to give it up? The more nature finds it repugnant, the more must I force myself to overcome it.

5. I will take pains to say my office with more attention, so as to savour more the consolations the Lord can put in one's way there, when one carries out this duty with more piety than I display. Since I have become aware that I have generally been saying all my prayers with little attention and recollection, I will take the greatest care never to begin them without recollecting myself for a moment so as to place myself in the presence of God; I will accompany this interior recollection with a great

³⁴ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, DM IV-1.

exterior modesty, not permitting myself to look about me nor listening in on conversations that are not part of the one thing that should hold my attention at that moment. And in my particular examens, I will apply myself especially to examine myself on the greater or lesser degree of fidelity that I observe in the fulfillment of this article.

6. I will do everything possible to keep myself constantly in God's presence, and I will bring myself back to it with frequent ejaculatory prayers.

7. As far as possible, I will not let a single day go by without reminding myself that with every day I am getting nearer to the priesthood; and, recognizing that I am totally unready to receive this sublime order worthily, I will humble myself profoundly before God, confessing my guilt for not having responded to the advances that his infinite goodness had in all truth desired in my regard, and beseeching him who has always covered me with his shadow, in his great mercy to forget my infidelities, to strengthen and confirm my resolutions, and to pour out anew on me in even more abundance, if it be possible, his grace and benefactions, and not to let me abuse them as in the past.

8. Lastly, I will beg the Blessed Virgin Mary to take me under her protection and to intercede on my behalf.

I will pray also to my dear guardian angel, St. Joseph, St. Charles, St. Eugene, St. Aloysius Gonzaga.

I will not fear either to pray to my venerable friend D. Bartholomew Zinelli, who loved me so much while he was alive.

My last resolution is to choose for each day of the week a holy deacon, to be my special protector in acquitting myself worthily of the functions of my order and so that all together they might obtain for me the virtues necessary for receiving the priesthood with the best possible dispositions. May I imitate their virtues; that is what I will set myself to do.

Sunday: St. Stephen.

Monday: St. Lawrence.

Tuesday: St. Vincent.

Wednesday: St. Francis of Assisi.

Thursday: St. Ephrem.

Friday: St. Arsenius.

Saturday: St. Maur.

86. To Mrs. de Mazenod, rue Papassaudy, in Aix. Bouches-du-Rhône³⁵.

When Eugene is back in Aix as a priest, he will not be getting much involved in family affairs; his time will be divided between ministry, study, and good works. Eugene is very happy with Eugenie's conduct.

L.J.C.

Paris, June 7, 1811

... All the details you give me about the family, and Nathalie especially, are delightful, I take a very vivid joy in all your pleasures, but it does upset me when on occasions like these you start bemoaning my absence. Even when I am back in Aix, I won't be able to be more actively involved than I am from Paris; you understand quite well that once I enter the ministry, on a permanent basis, the first sacrifice I will be making will be of anything that could be any kind of a distraction from my tasks and studies. A priest who wishes to do his duty, as I plan by God's grace to do mine, has not a moment's rest; whatever time is not spent in the tasks of the holy ministry belongs by right to study or other good works.

It is one thing to spend two months holidays at home, quite another to be there on a permanent basis. Its no use your citing me other examples, none of them could turn me against the plan I wish to follow. Everyone must answer for himself or, to put it in a better way, in a matter of this importance one does not look for advice from people who are not charged to answer for our souls before God's judgment seat, or if one wants to find a model it is among the saints who have gone before us and were able to win the reward that the models of our own day have yet to reach ...

... I will be writing to Eugenie as soon as I have the time. Her letter, full of common sense and sound reason, gave me the greatest pleasure. There is a very good understanding between us. When I speak to her about things of salvation it reminds me of Mr. Aranthon, one of the most worthy of the successors of St. Francis de Sales in the see of Annecy, who used to confess his mother and sister-in-law. I tell myself in all truth that I am preaching to someone who is worth much more than I am myself. At the same time, there is nothing wrong with that, as in reminding others of their duties, I feel myself covered with confusion when I see that I am carrying out my own so badly and that challenges me to do better. Besides,

³⁵ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the paragraphs omitted from this letter, Eugene speaks of errands, Nathalie, his excellent health, etc.

God in his goodness always gives some grace to his ministry of charity. So in all humility I will go on as I am doing, in the hope that the Lord will give his blessing more and more to a correspondence that tends to make him loved and served better ...

87. [Conference on the fear of God]³⁶.

Abundance of religious feasts to arouse our fervour. Meaning of the fear of God. Four effects of this gift.

Meeting of June 30, 1811.

Mr. de Mazenod began with the remark that the Church seemed at this season of the year to have multiplied the number of feasts so as to arouse our fervour. In effect, (he said, more or less in these words), we have celebrated one after another and almost at the same time the Ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, the feast of the precursor, that of the apostles Peter and Paul, and in a few days we will be celebrating that other feast so dear to the Association, the feast of the love of Jesus Christ for men, the feast of the Sacred Heart. What abundance, what profusion! What consoling subject-matter for meditation is furnished you by this thought, one that must have come to you on the solemnity of the Ascension, that the Saviour has gone before us to the place of glory to arouse our desires and indicate our places in the Kingdom which he has won for us at the cost of every drop of his precious blood.

You were still absorbed in this consoling mystery when the Church herself took you away from it and presented to your piety another object no less edifying and salvific, the memorial of the miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles assembled with Mary and the other disciples in the cenacle. You must have felt that it was not just a question of celebrating the memory of a glorious moment of the past, for you certainly shared in the very same favours that were poured out on the assembled disciples; the Holy Spirit, ever fecund and infinitely multiplying his benefactions, comes down anew today as then, accompanied by all his gifts, into souls so fortunate as to be busy preparing him a dwelling. Ah!

³⁶ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, DM V-1. Eugene himself writes up the account of the conference he delivered in the meeting of the Association of the Blessed Sacrament, annexed to Major Catechism for Young Ladies. June 30 was the feast day of the Association. This text is published here as a specimen of his talks in the Major Catechism programme.

the more faithful you have been, the more you will have drawn from that inexhaustible source. And of a surety was it ever more necessary to be abundantly provided with the graces of the Holy Spirit than at a time when all Christians should be desiring to be afire with love like the Seraphim to enter into the spirit of the Church which celebrates at this time with such touching pomp the excessive charity of Jesus Christ for men in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist? But your sure grasp of your obligations in this regard, - and your profession of total devotion to Jesus Christ poured out on our altars for love of us is for me a very sure guarantee of your feelings with regard to the lovable Saviour of our souls, - for me to think it necessary to arouse your gratitude on this day; and anyway, it is only a few days since we acquitted ourselves of this duty towards you, and the feast of the Sacred Heart will soon provide us with the occasion to speak with you about it yet again; and so the short space of time that is available for our dialogue will be employed fixing your attention on another subject, all the more interesting as it will be the more useful for you: we wish to put forward a means that is practically infallible for not backsliding on the journey of perfection that you have embraced, this method will also be useful as a means of forging ahead in these ways where one so often goes astray if one does not take care to illumine one's journey; for, my children, it is not enough to promise to God, in moments of fervour, to be faithful to him until death. Who would not say as much in the same circumstances? Who would not desire, like St. Peter, to set up his dwelling on Mount Tabor? But that is not enough, one must foresee the times of tribulation: the time when one will have to follow Jesus Christ to the Pretorium, accompany him to Calvary, and wouldn't we run many risks then of denying our good Master, of fleeing in cowardly fashion and turning our backs on him, if we have not taken wise precautions to remain faithful at all times.

This means that I am proposing to you is the fear of God; not, certainly, that servile fear, the sad burden of criminal souls who raise their eyes to heaven only to see there an avenging God ready to hurl thunderbolts on their guilty heads, but I want to speak to you of that filial fear, precious gift of the Holy Spirit, a gift you received from his liberal hand, and which leaves you with the task of cultivating it carefully in your souls. I speak to you of this habitual disposition that the Holy Spirit has placed in your souls to keep them in a disposition of respect before the majesty of God, and in dependance and submission to his wishes, distancing them from everything that can displease God, from everything that can sadden in however small a manner his spirit.

This gift is the foundation and basis of all the others because the first step on God's path is flight from evil and this is a property of this gift.

You may judge the excellence of this gift by the effects it produces in the soul. These effects are: 1° to inspire in the soul a continual reserve, a holy trembling, a profound self-emptying before God. The soul enriched with this precious gift no longer acts with that precipitation that is so common and of which one has so often to repent: it examines in advance of committing itself to act if that action holds in itself anything that could displease its God: its only fear is to offend, nay rather to cause grief even to the one it loves; the most seductive things lose their power of attraction once it discovers within them the slightest trace of imperfection: penetrated by a sense of its nothingness, it keeps itself humbly prostrate in the presence of its Creator, listening with attention to his every least inspiration, repulsing without cease every least obstacle that could slow it in its journey and dampen that admirable exchange it never ceases to enjoy with its God ...

The second effect of the fear of God is an extreme horror of every least offence to God, and a constant resolution to avoid their every occasion. How could a soul penetrated with a sense of its nothingness and baseness as much as with the sense of God's grandeur, a soul accustomed to live in continual reserve and a holy trembling, permit itself voluntarily to offend that Majesty before which it walks without cease? No, it is well nigh impossible for that evil to arise, all the more as the horror it feels for anything that might tend to diminish its sweet communications with its God have it take all kinds of precautions not to be surprised by the enemy's ambushes; it avoids with an extreme care every least occasion, and while so many others through an ill-judged sense of security fall, alas! shamefully into the snare, it distances itself even from things that are perfectly licit lest they be for it, in its weakness, an occasion to sadden the spirit whose delight it is to rest in its heart, and thus ensures a perseverance that will lead to an immortal crown of glory and felicity.

The third effect of the gift of the fear of God is a humble confession of its fault when one has fallen into some sin. Alas! however determined the most holy of just men may be never to offend the good God, however sincere may be this generous resolution, human weakness is so great that it can contrive that the faithful soul, weighed down under the weight of the mud from which is moulded the gross body which was given it to be inseparably united with it, it could happen, I say, that it forgets for an instant its promises and that it offends momentarily, and as if taken by surprise, the good Master whom she never wanted to afflict. These pass-

ing faults are the unfortunate prerogative of our humanity. Children of Adam, we participate each and every one of us today, be we ever so far distanced from that corrupted stock, in the weakness of our first father. Sin once entered into the world must needs work its frightful ravages in all flesh conceived in sin ... But be consoled, faithful souls, this power is limited, and the Holy Spirit, in pouring out on you this precious gift of the fear of God, has placed the remedy alongside the poison. It did more, yes, I dare to say it, it allows you to derive advantage from the very falls into which the fragility of your nature may have been able to lure you, for, as an effect of this gift, recognizing your fault immediately after it was committed, and knowing from your own experience how little you must count on the firmest of your resolutions, you seize the moment to establish yourselves in feelings of the profoundest humility, you redouble your trust in God, the one truly solid support, you make new efforts to unite yourselves more closely to him, you renounce finally more than ever your own intelligence and the esteem that you had perhaps previously conceived of your feeble virtue. And thus it is that it perfects itself by its very falls, so great is the mercy of God with regard to his poor children.

Finally the fourth effect of the gift of fear of God is a careful vigilance to restrain the disordered inclinations of the appetite; frequent self examinations to come to a knowledge of one's interior state, and there discern whatever may be contrary to fidelity in God's perfect service.

88. To Mrs. de Mazenod, rue Papassaudy, in Aix, Bouch[es]-du-Rhône³⁷.

Eugene is surprised at not getting any news. He will probably not be going to Aix in the holidays. There are some virtuous young people in Paris.

L.J.C.

Paris, July 1, 1811

A whole month has passed, dearest mamma, without any news. This delay seems rather long to me, and if I did not put it down to the harvest, or a trip to St. Laurent, I would be really put out. Even so Eugenie could have made up for your absence ...

³⁷ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the paragraphs omitted, Eugene speaks of his health and the visit of the abbot de Villeneuve.

July 2

My letter did not go off yesterday, and I resume it today too late to finish it in time to catch the post; perhaps this delay will give time for me to receive something from you or my sister. July 2 has come already, and it seems to me it will be really difficult for me to come and see you during the holidays; it certainly is not for lack of wanting, but if I cannot leave on the 20th or the 25th of this month, would it be worth the trouble of undertaking such a long trip for so short a time? As well as that, if you were all in the same place, but I see that it will be the same this year as last, the whole family will be scattered. It is quite true that as I have finished my courses I will not be under pressure to return exactly on commencement day; but that would never be more than eight or ten days of a difference. Much as I would have liked to know a little about what your plans are, so as to be in a position to organize myself should it happen that the important matter that keeps me in Paris should take a surprise turn and leave me confident that my absence would not be a risk to my own interests ...³⁸.

July 3

There is no way to finish this letter, and I prefer rather to send it as it is than wait until tomorrow to finish it. I forgot to do something Mr. de Colonia had charged me to do for you and grandmama; namely, to tell you of the marriage of his daughter with her cousin Maurice de Giry. This marriage promises to bring happiness to both parties. Maurice is the happiest of men and his wife will be able with him to keep up the high piety she professes in imitation of her father and mother. Giry is by no means the usual kind of husband one meets these days, he has committed himself to prepare to receive the sacrament with all the requisite dispositions, and I was really edified last Tuesday, a working day, when I saw the two young spouses very devoutly hearing holy Mass at the Carmelite church, where by chance I was serving one myself on my way to Issy. No show, it is an understood thing (say that to Eugenie, I could cite her a hundred examples), no human respect, not caring one wit what people will say, etc., etc. And so when our darling Eugenie finds herself the only one in Aix to fulfill with courage and generosity the precepts of the Gospel, let her betake herself to Paris, where, thanks be to the Lord, there are still a

(38) Eugene was busy with the national council, inaugurated on June 17 and terminating on July 10 (cf. J. Leflon, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p.381). In this letter dated July 1, he writes: "I am, I assure you, far more distracted than I would want to be, by a large number of foreigners who, knowing no French, are forever asking me for this, that or the other ..."

fairly large number of faithful observers of the law. But here I am still writing away when I ought to have left already; I finish with my affectionate greetings, to you and all the family, lazy Nathalie included.

One more word of consolation for Eugenie. Among the good Christians of both sexes, I met some time ago a pair who are two angels and turn out to be her relatives. They are Mrs. and Miss de Gramont, niece and grand-niece of Cardinal de Boisgelin. This side of heaven one could not find more virtuous people. Mrs. de Gramont is the sister of Mrs. de Chabannes whom you met in Aix, where she spent some time with her uncle.

Goodbye, dear darling, I am away at the double.

89. To his grandmother, in St. Julien³⁹.

Eugene is planning to be ordained priest during Lent of 1812. He declined to be ordained at Trinity, 1811. He looks forward to celebrating the Eucharist for his grandmother in the chapel at St. Julien.

Issy, July 24, 1811.

According to my calculations, darling and dear mother, at the moment the whole family will be scattered: mother in Saint Laurent, Eugenie in Peyrolles, and you yourself in Saint Julien. So it would take too long to write to mother and have her pass on my news, and besides I am delighted to find an excuse to be in direct touch with my dear *darling little mother* whom I will always love more than myself. If I do not give myself this pleasure more often it is only because I am afraid you will feel obliged to write me back and tire out your eyes and I beg you to do me the kindness of not doing that; for me it is enough to know that you are well, that is all I want, and all I need. Don't even think of replying; let's just chat here together for a few moments, in the drawing-room, on the court or in the garden, just as you like. But first let's take a little stroll to the chapel; simple as it is, your being there gives it a feeling of devotion. We shall be there together one day, and what will be my task? Dear God, I cannot think of it without trembling. I shall offer on that altar the holy Victim; I shall offer Him in your name; I shall present you to our common Saviour, and you will receive from my hand with thanksgiving Him whom you were perhaps the first to teach me to bless, to praise in the days of my tenderest childhood. We will turn that tiny chapel into a sanctuary,

³⁹ Copy in Rambert I, 81-82 and Rey I, 119-121.

and make up with the greatness of our hearts for all that is lacking by way of grandeur in that earthly temple; we will invite along from time to time those good countryfolk whom the Lord has marked out with his graces, and, all together, we will storm heaven to obtain all we need to arrive more surely in our homeland; for all our desires must tend towards that eternal Kingdom which was acquired for us by our good Master and which he destines for us if we are faithful. So I will be your chaplain, and you will have no need to go to strangers to nourish your piety; you will find within your family, - for are you not my mother? - a minister who is always at your call to fulfil his sublime functions. But I have been talking as if I were a priest already; in fact I am only a deacon; and when shall I be a priest? I dare not indicate a date; it cannot be too long delayed however; and to prevent it happening last Trinity, what a fight I had to put up! Luckily for me, a reason existed *against which no argument could prevail*⁴⁰, for as to pleading personal unworthiness, that would not hold up if obedience said one should not hold back. In a word, I am still only a deacon but in all probability I will take the great and formidable step during Lent. You will get news of it in good time, so that you can help me with your prayers; You will not be able to be present at my first Mass, but all masses have the same value and are equally fruitful if one comes with the right dispositions ...

90. To Mrs. de Boisgelin, née Mazenod, hôtel de Boisgelin, in Aix⁴¹.

Eugene's advice to his sister: love of God, detachment from the world. This requires daily meditation on some saving truth; Eugene has come to understand this all too late. He invites her to receive the sacraments more often, especially the Eucharist.

L.J.C.

[Paris, August 12, 1811]⁴².

... When I restarted my letter, it was my intention, dear friend, not to finish until I got to the end of the paper, but now Castellane is here and he

⁴⁰ Eugene did not want to be ordained by Cardinal Maury, named by Napoleon as archbishop of Paris without the authorization of, and conferral of jurisdiction by, Pope Pius VII: cf. Leflon, *op. cit.*, I, p. 385, 389-390.

⁴¹ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the omitted paragraphs, Eugene expresses his pain at not being able to go on holiday in Aix, he speaks of Nathalie and especially about Joseph de Boisgelin, the brother of Eugénie's husband; he invites Eugénie to show a lot of patience towards him: "Like me you must be wary of the vivacity that is natural to us; this would be an excellent gift if we used it properly, but we must moderate it a little."

⁴² In the place for the date, Eugene writes: despatched August 12.

is going to leave this evening and, if I do not wish to miss him, I must go straight away to his house; and so I cut short my conversation not without regret, for it was my intention, as usual, to finish with some edifying words that might be of some use to you. I also had to tell you that your last letter was as well written as it was good, only your friendship misled you about me, and I know myself too well to be able to be deceived, but I do not wish to vie with you in humility, I limit myself to asking you with some insistence for your prayers. For my part you can guess for yourself if I can forget you in mine. Let us love the good God with all our heart, let us use this world as if we did not use it, that is without becoming fond of its vanities and lies. I do not know if you ever put into practice a suggestion I think I gave you, namely never to let pass a single day without meditating on some saving truth. One makes a monster out of the least thing before one has tried it, and it is an effect of the demon's allure, but when once one has experienced the consolations that the Lord pours out on souls of good will who sincerely desire to walk in the way of the commandments, then one groans that one thought too late to procure for oneself this happiness; alas!, what a subject for regret it is for me as I speak to you; I know better than anyone how I have abused the Saviour's graces, and I know what it costs to have kicked against the goad, and it is to save others some tardy and almost irremediable regrets that I do not cease to cry out: children of men, how long will your hearts be closed? Why do you love vanity and seek out a lie? Yes, my good friend, living in the midst of the world, and obliged by your state to find yourself amidst scandals of every kind which that enemy of J.C. loves to stir up all the time, you must forearm yourself against his attacks. For that you have to enter sometimes within yourself, and at one time think about the end that awaits these reckless breakers of our God's laws, transport yourself to the last moment of your life, and think what you would then have wished you had done, and at another time meditate on some other truth. In the morning make a preparatory examen, i.e., review in advance the actions of the day, what you must do, the relations you will be having with your neighbour, the occasions of giving offence to the good God in which you may find yourself, and then cool and composed foresee and fix the manner in which you will behave, it is the only way to sin but rarely in life, taking a precaution of this kind. I know a young soldier who never misses this practice a single day, and so it is he is always victorious in all the attacks that the world levels at him with an unbelievable obstinacy. Pending my return when we will be able to fix together what is the most expedient thing for you, continue to frequent the sacraments, and do not keep putting off what you ought to have been doing all along. Stop deceiving yourself, in your

position it is an illusion of the devil to make the holy practice of a sacramental life impracticable for you to imagine that it would be necessary to disengage yourself entirely from all the difficulties in which the situation in which you find yourself obliges you to remain, what an error that is! Are you not a married lady, a mother, a nursing mother because it is God's will? So in fulfilling the duties of a woman, a mother, a nursing mother you are doing what is pleasing to God, and how could one maintain that in fulfilling the duties that God has imposed on us, be they what they may, we are not fit to respond to the sweet invitations he makes to all his own to come to him, to draw in his Sacrament strength and life, etc. The first Christians understood it better than we do, when notwithstanding their occupations, and all the bother that the various employments in which they found themselves occasioned for them, they let not a day go by without approaching him who cries from the depths of his tabernacle, throne of love to which he calls all men: come, come all of you who are crushed under the weight of your labours; come and I will give you strength and restore you [Mt. 11, 28]. God! how can Christians be so insensible to such tender invitations, how can they resist such pressing invitations. How is it that they do not feel that all their excuses are only pretexts suggested by their laziness and lukewarmness. I am speaking of those Christians who live as such, for as to those who are Christians only by baptism, they form a class apart, and if I had to speak to them, I would speak differently. I have still so many things to say to you and yet I have to conclude, even so I have not answered the points in your letter. Before finishing, I will answer in two words the question you raise: "I am always the same person, what am I to think of my communions?" What you have to think of them, is that they save you from becoming worse; you will remain always at the point where you are for so long as you do not communicate more often; you will not make progress without changing your system. Stop deceiving yourself if you are waiting to be more perfect so as to communicate more often, it is a foolish enterprise and one that cannot succeed; but by stirring up in your heart lively desires to unite yourself more often to your God, by making yourself more docile to his invitations, and by frequenting the sacraments, it is then that you will become more perfect. This means is infallible. So begin with not ever letting a month pass without approaching the sacraments, place all your trust in God. Act to please him; don't resist his inspirations, allow grace to do its work in your heart, place there the least of obstacles and you will see ...

91. To Mrs. de Boisgelin, née de Mazenod, hotel de Boisgelin, in Aix. Bouches-du-Rhône⁴³.

Grief on learning of the death of his grandmother Joannis. Her body should not be left in the cemetery at St. Julien, but be removed to the Enclos. Respect due to the remains of the baptised.

L.J.C.

Issy, September 7, 1811, despatched the 11th.

I was intending to write you in a few days time, my darling sister, but the letter I have received from you and especially the post-script added by mother decided me to do so much sooner. I am not going to begin with a description of the effect produced on me by the frightful news of the death of a person who was so dear to me⁴⁴, that would only needlessly increase the grief that you yourself are feeling without doing anything to lessen the profundity of my own. All I ask for from the Lord at this moment is that he be so gracious as to accept in expiation of my sins my afflicted resignation to his divine Will. It would have all the more merit, if I really do comply with this duty, as my being away has rendered my unhappiness all the more cruel. But I said that I did not intend to say anything about the way I am feeling. Let us return to what concerns us all at this present moment. In the extreme misfortune that we have just experienced, after submission to the adorable designs of Providence, I cannot think of any greater consolation than preserving so far as possible the precious remains of a body that was for so long the obedient instrument of the most beautiful soul ever made (making the reservations our faith requires). For as long as I can remember, but even more so since I became a cleric, when I first realized that it was within the bounds of possibility for me to survive persons whom I would have wanted rather to precede into the tomb, I wept and often copiously and resolved that only death would separate me from what I held so dear on earth. The Enclos⁴⁵ always seemed to me the most suitable place to perpetuate this companionship that death must sooner or later interrupt, and my desire was to be reunited in that place with my loved ones or wait there until they should come to join me if I

⁴³ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin.

⁴⁴ Mrs. Joannis, Eugene's grandmother, died on August 15 after being ill for a few days. It was Rose-Joannis who informed Eugene on August 21, 1811. Mrs. de Mazenod and Eugénie wrote in their turn about this on August 25 and 30.

⁴⁵ A property of Mrs. de Mazenod, situated at that time a short distance outside Aix.

were to be the first to die. I have become so accustomed to this idea that I cannot conceive how I have never spoken to you about it. The Enclos, just a short distance from the town where we live, was more suited than any other place to fulfil my plan. Those among us who survived the others would find it easy to go each day for a little chat with those who had gone on before, and seated there where they must themselves come in their turn, they would have enjoyed a salutary meditation on death and eternity. In the light of that, you can imagine what I felt when I learnt that my only hope of not losing, at one and the same time and for ever, both the person loved and her precious and venerable remains, had vanished in an instant through someone's decision to bury her in the wretched corner where the dead of Vallon St. Julien are piled up on top of one another. I wrote straight away to mother to do something about this state of affairs; she answered that in effect both she and my uncle before her had had the same thought that I had communicated to her, but I do not know why they did not carry it out; I put it down to the numbing effect which such a terrible blow would of necessity have on those who were present at St. Julien. So now I turn to you and ask you to beg my uncle on my behalf to seek a way to give us back our mother. She is to be buried in the Enclos in a casket of walnut wood which will be placed in a small vault or tomb until such time as I have had built a small chapel where one day I will celebrate the divine mysteries for a person with whose memory that place of retreat is so filled. Armand will not refuse to lend his help in these circumstances. If reasons of health, that a little money would soon remove, should be raised about touching the casket at this time, at least some precautions should be taken so that no mistake will be made when the removal does become possible, such as for example constructing immediately around the existing grave a little wall beneath the soil or some other means that one would judge best suited to avoid the kind of misunderstandings that are easy in a cemetery where each year, in horrific acts of profanation, the bones of those who died earlier are disinterred so as to bury in the place from which they are expelled new ones which will in their turn be disturbed in the sad possession of a dwelling which they had never believed could have been taken from them. I have seen with my own eyes this kind of profanation hitherto unknown among civilized nations, and which should never occur among Christians to whom religion commands such a great respect, veneration even, for bodies even though separated from the souls to which they have been so closely joined, and from which they are separated only for a time. However, as I was saying, I have seen in that wretched cemetery not merely limbs unearthed but an entire corpse and all that was done to save it from the rapacity of birds of

prey was to cover it with an old door which happened to be lying there. I tremble with horror at the prospect of leaving in St. Julien our darling mother and exposing her precious remains, that our duty as much as our love obliges us to preserve with respect and filial piety, to the same infamous treatment. Besides, whatever even though something may be done to putting a stop to that vandalism, could we endure the idea of being deprived of ever being able to go and weep and pray on the tomb of a tenderly cherished mother whose memory will live on eternally in our hearts, engraved there by such love and generosity as never to be able, I will not say to be effaced, but even to be dimmed. These reflections will be more than enough to convince you of the necessity of lending your support to my just desires. I leave you the responsibility of arranging this matter with our dear uncle and Armand. I am counting on your succeeding more than you can imagine and would in fact be dreadfully upset should I meet with the refusal of a service that it seems to me must concern the whole family. I will pay all the expenses; I have dropped a line to Emile, expressing the feelings that seemed appropriate in the circumstance of our common misfortune, but that must have been in my case more deeply felt, alas, than by anyone, you know too well why, the love of my darling, excellent, perfect grandmother being for me a necessity; but I finish with bidding you a most loving farewell, and begging you for a prompt answer on all I have asked for, let me know what my uncle thinks, your own opinion, how it is to be done, etc. etc. I still have a thousand things to say and even though I wrote very small I have run out of space; I will never write to you again on such a small piece of notepaper. Goodbye.

92. To Mrs. de Boisgelin, née de Mazenod, hôtel de Boisgelin, in Aix, Bouches-du-Rhône⁴⁶.

Sadness at the thought of his grandmother's death, but consolation in his certainty that she is in heaven. Submission to God's will. Invitation to unite herself more closely to God through frequenting the sacraments.

L.J.C.

19 September 1811

While I'm waiting for one of your letters, dear Eugenie, I will resume my little chat with you, and as the thought that is uppermost in my mind is

⁴⁶ Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the omitted paragraphs, Eugene asks for details of his grandmother's illness and says he is seeking distraction by teaching Italian to a dozen of his confreres.

the memory of our darling grandmother, I will say a few more words about her, for it gives me some kind of consolation to speak of her, her love for me, and mine for her, her virtues, my regrets, pain, tears; all of this is permissible provided resignation and submission to God's will crown and perfect our feelings, for this is something that has to be said over and over again so as to really sink in, that we must not weep for our dead as infidels do who do not believe in the resurrection; we await that resurrection, and our hope is for a blessed one, that is the moment when that joy and happiness will begin that will have no end for this body even though the soul abandon it for a while to corruption; as for the soul, it does not even have to wait to be reunited with the body it animated on earth, and with which it must be clothed anew, but from the moment it has ceased to expiate the last remnants of its indebtedness to Divine Justice, it enters into possession of that torrent of delights that the Lord promised and merited for its fidelity. Dear God, what a consoling thought! And when I remember the saintly life of our wonderful mother, I cannot help but rejoice and be full of confidence that this time of expiation is already accomplished for her, all the more as I have done everything I can to obtain for her all the helps that God's mercy and the Church's charity enable me to obtain for her both through my own efforts and through those of three or four hundred others who have applied indulgences for the repose of her soul and which, it is my hope, will have procured their full effect. It will always be true to say that we are the unfortunate ones, the ones who have cause to weep, for who could ever replace her tenderness? I would offer all the treasures of the world for a quarter of an hour's chat with that darling mother who has never had an equal; but once again let us console ourselves with the very true thought that in heaven everything comes to perfection, even friendships, and that she, who has loved us so much during her mortal life, will be able to love us in a really different way, now that she has still more power to do us good. I am waiting impatiently for every least detail about her illness. I am sorry to say I am tormented by the idea that our poor cousin's illnesses are positively parricidal in their effects; the first illness he suffered cost the life of his mother, and now has the one he has just got over finished off our grandmother? Whether this be so or not, let us adore God's designs. Do not spare me any of the details of what caused and aggravated that dreadful illness ...⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ On October 27 Eugenie gave a detailed account of the illness and death of Mrs. Joannis. She confirmed Eugene's intuition: Mrs. Joannis fell ill at the same time as her grandson Emile Dedons and she quickly died of it partly because of her worrying and nursing.

Heavens above, how many thousands of times in the course of the day has one to lift up one's heart to God so as not to lose that Christian resignation that religion even more than reason requires of us; the latter would be feeble indeed if it did not have the former to lean on; so let us strive never to exceed the limits that the Lord permits our just grief, and let us do everything we can to imitate the great St. Louis who when he was deeply moved by the death of his mother whom he loved in a very special way, and in the middle of the tears and sobs that this loss drew from him, even then acknowledging and wishing to submit himself entirely to the Will of God, not only resigned himself, but even thanked the Lord for taking his mother away from him, whom, he said, had only been lent to him for a time ... I share your feelings about the two people you mention⁴⁸, they are each in their own way incorrigible in the way they live, but what can one do, we have to be patient and offer to God in his goodness the vexations they cause us. Yes, let us come closer and closer to this good God, he is the only one we can rely on to be always equally good, equally the friend, always ready to do us good; so let us be faithful to him, love him, and try to serve him as best we can, not neglecting his graces, making use of the means of salvation he has left us; may nothing in the world be able to stop us going to draw from the abundant well-spring of his sacraments strength, consolation, and a pledge of our predestination. Let us frequent the sacraments, yes, frequent the sacraments, there we have the only way to become saints; you know what I mean, my Eugenie; goodbye, with all my love.

93. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix⁴⁹.

Eugene would like to be in Aix, not to help his mother in her business affairs, but to console her over the death of his grandmother. He will be staying longer than foreseen in Paris to finish his studies and replace the Sulpicians who have been driven away from the Seminary. On his return to Provence, Eugene intends to live at the Enclos with Brother Maur, an ex-Trappist, as his manservant. Invitation to more frequent communion. Death of Nanon, the de Mazenod maid in Palermo. News from his father,

⁴⁸ In a letter dated September 12, Eugenie said that her uncle Roze-Joannis had gone away on holiday, leaving Mrs. de Mazenod alone to attend to St. Laurent; she also spoke of her cousin Emile Dedons' awkwardness and egoism.

⁴⁹ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB I-7. In the paragraphs that have been omitted [pp. 9, 10 and 12], Eugene explains, in the minutest detail, how to go about the transfer of his grandmother's remains from St. Julien to the Enclos. He suggests his mother sell the lands at St. Laurent.

after 4 years' silence. Why Eugene entered the Seminary. His certainty that his grandmother is in heaven. Her remains must be interred at the Enclos.

Paris, October 14, 1811

How nice it would be, I am not going to say to relieve you of all responsibility in business affairs, as it is impossible for me now to get involved in them, but to wipe away your tears and soothe away your sadness with all the consolations a tender heart can offer. But just at the moment God's glory, which has to be our only rule, seems to insist that I curb this desire and leave off satisfying it until a little later on. If I want to be of some use in the ministry, I still have a lot of studying to do, and it is quite clear that I could not undertake anything in my present state and keep a perfectly clear conscience. I am well aware that there are priests who are less prepared than myself perhaps and who nevertheless press on, but it is a very great evil. And I think it is the highest form of ignorance when one thinks one knows what one is in fact ignorant of or knows only in a sketchy way. As well as that, in my position, as I have said many times before, I am obliged to be better instructed than most others. In the meantime, all these delays provide an occasion for acquiring merit, as every time one sacrifices nature and one's very natural inclinations for the sake of duty, one accumulates treasures of grace which the just remunerator can be relied on to repay when he sees fit. So let's keep on offering up our separation for a little while longer to the Lord whose service requires it; and let's even rejoice that we have something to give him in exchange for all the love he bears us. I do not think you are under any illusion that it is because I like living in the capital that I am staying on in Paris, for I can honestly say that it means nothing to me and in fact it takes quite a lot to make me show my nose outside on the street. As well as that I like solitude, and, leaving aside a lot of other reasons for making me prefer Provence, it is much nicer to keep to one's room in that beautiful climate than under the sad and cloudy skies of Paris.

Before finishing this letter, I want to share an idea with you for which I would like to have your consent, however reasonable it may be in itself. You know I have always wanted to retire to the Enclos for a multitude of reasons that it would take too long to go into here. Our mother, tender as always, often told me that she planned to stay there with me; and perhaps you would have become the third hermit when you came to see all the charms of this happy retreat. As a part of the arrangements for this establishment, it was clearly understood that I should take on a manservant, who was needed to perform a variety of services that could not be done by

women. In my own case as a cleric there are special reasons, of permanent validity, not to have women in my service. The canons prescribe a certain age. And the resolution I have taken never to let one enter my bedroom, let alone my bed, means I must resolve to look after myself all my life or take a man into my service. As well as that I shall probably have a chapel where I shall be saying Mass practically on a regular basis; I need a man too for this service. If God in his goodness wants to make use of me to do some good in the direction of souls, I will be hearing men's confessions at home; again a man will be needed for them to contact for I could never endure having a woman coming and prowling around my apartment while I was engaged in the ministry with men who today like less than ever to have indiscreet confidants as parties to their acts of religion. In short, there is nothing for it but for me to have a manservant. But there are two difficulties. First, you have to pay men more and they are more demanding than women; and they are often lacking in virtue, etc. Secondly, one can foresee having problems when one has servants of different sexes in the house. I accept each of these points, but at the same time it cannot be denied that one can have the kind of manservant who, through the work he carries out in a house, does the work of two women, and who through his acknowledged exemplary behaviour does not give rise to any concern on the score of difficulties coming from his living with servants of the opposite sex under the same roof; and as well as that one can set one's mind completely to rest on that point by engaging along with him women of a certain age only. Now, if this manservant can do the work of two maids, do things even that no woman could do, is honest, discreet, gentle, of outstanding piety, the difficulties vanish; only the advantages remain. And that is precisely what I have in mind for when I return to Provence. There is at this very moment in the house where I live a man as gentle as a lamb, a man of foresight and meticulous habits, with the piety of an angel, instructed in the arts of linen-keeping, a job he used to have in the community where he was a Brother, for he is a religious, and fervent, able to turn his hand to anything and never wasting a minute; in short, I could not have a better man in my service and one would be hard put to find his equal. The question now is to find out if you would have any objection to my engaging him as from the time I leave. I have already sounded him out; he would not be displeased to come with me. As to his wages, I would undertake to pay any extra you think it would cost you on top of my stipend.

Please turn all these aspects over in your mind, none of them is of a trivial nature, and let me have your answer. I think he is familiar with working in the countryside and could help us to make a go of our country

estates. At the same time it is not something that has to be done tomorrow; it is just a question of knowing where I am and having a word with him about entering into my service. But as I do not want to do a thing about this without your consent, I wanted to bring it to your attention and let you see that if I have to have a manservant, you will find it to your advantage too, especially when you come across a man who is of a more gentle nature than any of the maids you ever took into your service.

I began this letter thinking to send it through the post, but there is too much to say to be satisfied with just three pages; so it will be either Mr. de St-Vincent or Father Charles who will be entrusted with it. For this reason I can speak more openly about something I had not thought it prudent to inform you of through the post. I will not enter into any discussions about it as they do not change anything. Our directors have been definitively driven away from the seminary and obliged to retire to their own house; they will leave laden down with merit before God and deeply regretted by all of us. The testimony that we will make on their behalf through all eternity will be that they never ceased, without a single exception, to be an example for us and a model of every Christian and ecclesiastical virtue. It is their departure that obliges me to stay. I could not leave the seminary without creating most serious problems; my example would be followed by others, and at this present moment the government is closely following what is happening here. I am one of the key people in the house, and in some respects perhaps *the* key person; my departure would create a scandal which could not be ignored. Whereas the good of the house and therefore of the Church requires that I stay. So I will stay, for everything points to that: God's glory, the good of the Church, edification of neighbour, my own advantage. Natural inclination is the only thing to suffer, for I know full well that this decision will bring you some heart-ache; for yes, darling mother, this will cost you a little pain for that is the only thing that I find hard to bear. It is your pain alone that affects me in my own sacrifices; God in his goodness gives me the grace to scarcely feel what concerns me personally. But would we want to win heaven at no cost to ourselves? No; so let us place all these contradictions at the foot of the cross of our good Jesus; let us offer him throughout the day all that we are doing to please him, and after that let us be at peace. Dear mother, are you not going a little more often to the source of all consolation? Cannot you hear this Saviour, who calls to you from his tabernacle: Dear soul, why am I humbled here like this? Is it in vain that I keep on re-echoing these self-same words that I said to my disciples: come to me, all you who labour and are heavy-laden: come and I will give you rest, and restore you; unite with me in this intimate union for which I remained with you,

and balm will flow in your veins, and your soul will be filled, strengthened, renewed. In the name of God, must I be always crying like this in the wilderness? Do you believe that there is anyone else in the world to whom your salvation, happiness, holiness are more dear than to me, or do you actually think me so blind or ignorant as to keep on proposing a means that will not be for your good? What am I to say? If I did not think it necessary for the good of your soul to frequent the sacraments more often than you do, do you think I would keep coming back to it so often? Just remember, dear mother, that I am thirty years old, a minister of the Church, I could be a priest and I am your son, and after all that judge whether you should listen to my words. One of two possibilities must be true: either this difficulty you have about going to the sacraments comes from yourself, or it is inspired in you by your confessor. If it comes from you, it is culpable negligence, which must at all costs be overcome. If it comes from your confessor, I do not hesitate to say in God's presence, who hears what I say and inspires me to write these things, you must forthwith forsake this blundering guide. If everyone thought and acted in this way, O.L. would have decided to stay with us under the species of bread all for nothing! But that is enough on that topic. Just remember that anybody who keeps from the sacraments, either by his advice or in any other way, someone who lives as regular a life as you do, is a dangerous man from a doctrinal point of view, and one whose opinions have been rejected by the Church from apostolic times until our own.

I have received your letter dated October 6. I confess it raised my spirits. I was not precisely languishing, but that good letter came just at the right moment. I was delighted to have the news about our dear Sicilians. But how sad to hear of the death of poor Nanon! I was thinking of her just the other day, and the thought caused me some disquiet; I thought it was harsh and almost unjust that we had compelled, albeit as it were unintentionally, that unfortunate woman to live out an involuntary exile, separated from her relatives, a prey to boredom, etc. I lamented her fate; it seemed to me that I would have wished to find a way to console her. I thought about how old she was, I supposed her to be now well on in years. I was worried about her dying, fearing that it might catch her by surprise without her being sufficiently prepared. And then your letter arrived announcing her sad end. God, when one thinks how precious is a soul, what it has cost our Saviour, the dreadful outcome that awaits it if it remains ungrateful to the end. God, I tremble; poor woman, I was very attached to her. Three hours to prepare herself to appear before God, and even then did she still have her senses? It is not likely. Compare that frightful death, which reminds me of poor Mrs. de Perier, which was also

so disastrous, with the happy death, the gentle and peaceful end of our saintly mother. Do not you feel a kind of secret consolation, which is even stronger than the bitterness her loss causes you? There are some things one can hardly put into words but feels very strongly. Yes, it seems to me that I am certain that our darling, tender and venerable mother is already enjoying eternal happiness. And can that consoling thought keep company in our heart with a pagan sadness? Why go on weeping for one who is enjoying the fulness of happiness? Would we grudge her a destiny that fills her soul with the most ineffable joy? From heaven where that beautiful soul is bathed in supreme happiness, with no desire but to do the will of God, could she give her approval to an excessive grief, which is not conformed to that holy will? We are Christians, we aspire all of us to that heavenly homeland; it is there we shall see one another again in transports of joy. Could we, miserable mortals, for all our tenderness, compensate her here below for what she would lose in happiness, if instead of reigning in heaven, she dwelt again amongst us? No, no. Leave her to enjoy there a happiness that the mercy of our God has merited for her; and far from weeping for her, let us rejoice with her as she contemplates face to face that great God, whom here below we can but glimpse.

Let us, surely, not forget her precious remains. But let us deal with them without grief, without bitterness, as befits the relics of a holy person whose soul is reigning in glory. So let us lift up our hearts to God. Let us betake ourselves for a moment into heaven. See there our mother at the side of our King, with some empty places beside her, which are destined for ourselves. Let us thank God for his gifts; and, refreshed in spirit by this ravishing thought, let us be busy with what remains to us of our mother on earth. In that context we can discuss it, with no fear that we shall be troubled by spasms of importunate and deranged grief.

Starting with the principle that we must conserve with reverence the bodies of the saints, that nothing here below can be more precious to us than the remains of our fathers; listening to the voice of religion, and that of nature which commands it; imitating the example that all the patriarchs and other holy personages in Sacred Scripture have given us; we wish to keep by our side the mortal remains of our mother and rescue them from the profanation that they will inevitably be exposed to in the wretched corner where they are at present buried. It would no doubt have been easier to satisfy this desire, just, religious and in conformity with nature as it is, at the first moments of our loss. How is it that no one thought at least of placing them secretly in the vault of Mr. d'Agout? The reason is self-evident and lies in the troubled state of mind that such an unhappy event

must cause in those who might have thought of it. There were other possibilities too, that no-one thought of; and as usually happens, the worst possible solution was the one adopted. But what is done is done; we must now think of a way to remedy the situation.

I presume that you really are convinced of the necessity of moving these relics, and that you think as I do that it would be dreadful, odious, execrable for us to contemplate leaving our mother's remains: 1° in a place where it will soon not be possible for us to go, as I do not give it more than two years before Emile gets rid of the place; 2° in a place where we know with certainty that vultures and crows will finish by making playthings of these bones that we would, if we have any heart, wish to gild with gold. I will not speak further on this topic; I have said enough in other letters. And besides it is not possible to have two opinions on this subject ...

So that, I think, is just about all there is to be said on that topic; let's pass to another, as I still have some time and some paper. The news you give me of my father and uncles thrilled me all the more in view of getting none for nearly four years⁵⁰. But how did you manage to get our news through to him? Was it through Alexander? I hope you had the goodness to explain why I have not written, the reason that keeps me in Paris, and what made me embrace the state which is my consolation here below and which, I hope, will bring me glory and happiness in heaven. Pure love of the glory of God, the most ardent desire for the salvation of the neighbour, the needs of the abandoned Church, there you have the one and only reason for my entry into the clerical state. I have always been afraid that my good parents would imagine there was something else, as I did not always show myself as thinking along these lines. That is why I would have really liked you to tell him about all the struggles I had to go through before eventually overcoming the tender but all too human attachment that I feel for you and that dear and incomparable grandmother whom I always loved no less than you do, so as to offer a complete sacrifice of my natural inclinations and separate myself for God over a number of years from those whom I would never have wanted to leave for all the advantages the world might offer ...

⁵⁰ Mrs. de Mazenod's letter of October 6 begins: "I had to write a long letter to Alexander and Victor [Amyot]. I took advantage of the occasion to write also to your father of whom I had some news through Alexander who had received some letters dated April 28. The three brothers, he tells me, are well, but big old Nanon is dead."

94. Spiritual conference⁵¹.

Commentary on Mt. 24, 15-35. Sadness over the departure of the Sulpician directors. Promise to maintain the spirit of peace, unity and fervour at the seminary.

Paris, November 15, 1811.

Why ply me with your questions on this day of grief and sadness, my heart broken with sorrow and unable to respond but with sighs?⁵²

How could I, oppressed in soul, find fruit in meditating upon the terrible truths contained in tomorrow's Gospel?⁵³ That salutary fear the Church wishes to inspire in the faithful by placing before their eyes the terrifying prophecy of the last times, how could it touch my soul, wholly preoccupied with love, gratitude and sorrow and torn asunder by each of them in turn? Alas! You, Sir, it is for you to say, who come so generously and with sympathetic charity to succour us in our extreme distress, to wipe away our tears, it is for you to say if ever there were a sorrow like to ours, if ever there were a sorrow more just.

No, our heart is not so boundless as to be able to cope with so many different themes, and if my distraught imagination should dwell momentarily on that frightful catastrophe predicted for the end times; on the tribulations to take place on the great days of vengeance, in whose course must be accomplished all that has been written of anthemas and curses; on the oppression announced to the whole earth; on that fearful seduction which would carry away even the just, should not God, for their sake, cut short that time of troubles; if I conjure up for one instant the terrible burning anger of God against the nations, passing over the earth in its fury, like a lightening-flash that comes from the East and lights up the sky in a trice as far as the West, *sicut fulgur exit ab Oriente, et paret usque ad Occidentem*, I think, I say, that if I pause on all these terrifying themes it is only in as much as it seems to me that the event I deplore might well be one of their sad precursors.

It is not God's pleasure, Sir, that I should give voice to complaints about this! That would be no way to imitate the example of the heroic

⁵¹ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, DM V-1. We do not indicate the various erasures in Eugene's text. When he says "Sir", he is no doubt addressing himself to the Superior.

⁵² Throughout the text Eugene is speaking about the removal of the Sulpicians from the Seminary. Cf. Letter to his mother, October 14, 1811.

⁵³ The eschatological Gospel passage (Mt. 24, 15-35) for the Saturday preceding the 24th Sunday after Pentecost.

submission we have before our eyes. No, not the least murmur will soil my lips. But even so who could condemn the piercing cry wrought by grief and who ever thought to stifle the sobs brought forth from feeling hearts by the loss of what they hold most dear?

How could we remain unmoved as we beheld the advent of this fatal day our bruised love fondly imagined to be impossible, when our beloved friends, our Masters, our good Fathers, were snatched from our bosom and parted for ever from their cherished children!

We still carry before us that harrowing picture of a grief-stricken family, hastening to the feet of the most virtuous of men to hear for one last time those heavenly words which never failed to produce such sweet effects in our souls and receive the final pledge of his love⁵⁴.

What a sight that was, this unanimous harmony of every heart melted, so to speak, into one to mourn the common loss.

We saw them flow, those tears that laid bare for us to see the depth of the feelings his tender and feeling soul nourished for us in secret.

How eloquent, this language of the heart! and what memories it awakes for those of us whom that so touching a scene reminded us of other farewells which were, alas, for ever.

A sad portent! If it needs be that harsh destiny should separate us for ever from our mainstays and guides; dear masters, take with you at least the assurance that the memory of what you have done for us will never be erased from our hearts; if only we could lay them bare for you to see! You would see how deeply the marks of your virtues are engraved there and our desire to follow the examples you have given. There you would read the firm and constant resolution taken by each one of us to follow with fidelity the holy Rules you have handed down to us. Yes, we each and all protest, giving you for guarantee of our word the love and gratitude that we owe you on so many counts, we each and all protest with common accord that henceforth, as in the past, peace, unity and concord will hold sway in this place, that we will use all our strength lest we fall away from the fervour your presence sustained among us; and if human weakness should from time to time threaten to make us slack, we will sustain ourselves mutually with all the memories you leave behind with us; and

⁵⁴ Eugene is referring here to Mr. Duclaux; further on he alludes to the death of Mr. Emery on April 28, 1811. Cf. Eugene to his mother, May 2, 1811.

finally that our behaviour will show to all the world that the Directors of St. Sulpice have never inspired in their students any feelings other than those of the most tender piety, any principles other than those of the most complete submission to the powers that be, any teaching in a word other than that of the Church.

95. [Notes made] during the retreat made in Amiens, December 1811, in preparation for the priesthood⁵⁵.

Purpose of this retreat. Prayer asking for love of God. Eugene acknowledges himself to be a sinner, a "monster of ingratitude" towards the "uniquely lovable" Being. Meditations on God the Creator, man's end, the use of created things, sin, death, judgment, hell, the prodigal son.

December 1-21, 1811.

At last the Lord has answered my prayers and opened the way for me to make a retreat as I have always wanted to do it.

None of those I have made up to now has been able to satisfy me, and I would long for the moment which God's mercy now grants me at this decisive moment of my life when I must prepare myself to receive very soon the sublime and awesome priesthood of J.C. I pray that I may profit from the grace I am privileged to receive, and use it to purify my soul and rid my heart completely of creatures, so that the Holy Spirit, when it no longer encounters obstacles to its divine operations, may come to rest on me in all its fulness, filling everything within me with the love of J.C. my Saviour, in such a way that I live and breathe no longer but in him, consume myself in his love, serving him and spreading the news of how loveable he is and how foolish men are to seek elsewhere their hearts' resting place when they can never find it but in him alone. Jesus, good master, turn a look of compassion on your poor servant. It seems to me that I love you but I am afraid of deceiving myself; it seems to me that if you were to question me as you once questioned the Prince of the Apostles (it was the ardour of his love for you that motivated my choice of him as patron), it seems to me I would answer as did he: yes, Lord, I love you. But it would not need your putting the question for a third time to make me feel unsure of the sincerity of that love I had avowed for you, for, I repeat, I am afraid of deceiving myself and while I believe I love you, you would see, you

⁵⁵ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, MD V-1. Eugene followed the Thirty Day Retreat of Father Jude.

who are the uncreated Light, that illuminates the darkest corners of my heart, and reads in its most secret places, and plumbs the depths of hearts and loins, you would see that in fact I do not love you at all. My Lord, my Father, my love, bring me to love you; this only do I ask, for I know full well that that is everything. Give me your love.

But who am I, miserable sinner, to want to love very purity and sanctity! Ah! I am well aware that in the sins of my past I made a quite different choice; I gave myself over to the devil and his perverse works. See there the master I served, see there the one I loved. My God! Although that hideous period is now far distant, it is still present to my mind. May I never forget it! It will be the salutary counterweight to all the movements that my self-love would stir up in me. But you, O my Saviour, do you forget it, and keep in mind only your mercies.

So I am a sinner, I am aware of it, a great, indeed very great sinner. I am aware of it and I tell it to myself not once but a thousand times a day. I become even more convinced of it during the little retreat I made with my venerable Father Mr. Duclaux before starting this one or, to be more accurate, in preparation for this one. Even so I see no harm at all in pausing a moment again on this thought, to meditate further along the purgative way. So I will start my prayers with the one the Fathers of the spiritual life call the foundation, the pivot of every good retreat; I will consider man's end, why God created me, why he placed me on this earth, whether I have responded to the intentions the Creator had when he formed me, what I have achieved so far here below, what I must do in the future.

After that I will meditate on sin, horrible, execrable mortal sin, in which for so long I was happy to dwell, or to be more accurate, under whose empire I groaned for many a year. I will pass in review successively the other great truths of religion, but without lingering overly on them, as, for example, hell raises less fears in me than does lack of love for my adorable Master, my good Jesus.

I will follow, for the rest, the path as it is indicated to me, taking care to bring in each day some considerations relative to the priesthood I am so soon to receive.

I was not able to read yesterday evening, before going to bed, Father Judde's meditation on man's end. I was intending to read it this morning, but, after I began my prayer by putting myself in the presence of God, the sight of my sins held my attention for quite a long time. I considered what I am in the sight of God, who sees me as I was; I admired his goodness in so far as he endured having in his presence so wretched a sinner. The

patience with which this good Father waited for me seemed hardly conceivable, especially when I compared it with the blows that his justice had administered to right and left around me, while his mercy seemed to be reserved for me alone. The excessive extent of my ingratitude threw me into a state of confusion that is difficult to describe. I could not find any way to explain how a heart that is as feeling and loving as mine could be so barbaric towards what is most lovable, towards the being who is, properly speaking, the uniquely lovable being. I abandoned myself to the affective movements that this thought inevitably led to.

Convinced of being a monster of ingratitude, I saw myself as utterly incapable of prayer, or even of raising my eyes to a Master I have treated so cruelly. Even so I turned to the Holy Spirit with a prayer inspired by him in the name of J.C., sovereign Mediator, whose precious blood, this says it all, had expiated greater and more numerous sins than my own, enormous and numerous though they be.

After that I adored God the Creator. I imagined him forming man in his image, after creating this whole beautiful universe; He wished to give nature a priest, he wanted to create a being who would enter into relations with him, be able to lift up his thoughts to him, perform actions both worthy of and pleasing to him, able to serve him, able to love him. This being, I told myself, this being is me. My soul is an emanation from the divinity, that tends naturally towards it, and will never find rest outside of it; created solely to love God, etc. And my body equally is formed only for his service, to give glory and homage to God. All that exists was made to bring man to God, and the Creator gave man eyes so that, admiring so fine a work, he would give the glory to the sublime Architect. Dumb nature's interpreter, he received a tongue to sing the Creator's praises, to bless him in his own name and in the name of all that has no voice. The canticle of the three Hebrews in the furnace teaches us that that is how it should be; and man must render to the Creator the homage that the ant and the worm would not fail to give, if they had but received, like him, what is needed to fulfil this indispensable duty to the Creator. Hands were given to man to raise up altars and temples to the Most high, the feet for etc. But I come back to the soul. As we see, it was created solely to serve and love God. How has my own fulfilled this august destiny? To my shame, God placed in me I would almost say a kind of instinct to love him, my reason was not yet formed when I loved to dwell in his presence, to raise my feeble hands to him, listen to his word in silence as if I understood it. By nature lively and irrepressible, it was enough to bring me before the altar to make me gentle and utterly tranquil, so ravished

was I by my God's perfections as if by instinct, as I said, for at that age I did not understand them. What a happy augury these early beginnings were, had I been faithful to this wonderful way of grace. But to my shame this consoling seed was soon snuffed out by sin, and so it is I sullied your image, so it is I insulted your love, before ever I conceived what sin is and who it is whom I offended. I frustrated by my crimes the development of the plans you formed for me; and this soul that you gave me to praise you, bless you, love you with, defied you, insulted your generosity, turned from you and plunged into the filthy mire, from whence perhaps she would never have emerged, if, to crown all your mercies towards me, you had not worked some miracles in my favour.

And so it is, my Lord and Master, while you created me solely to love you, not only did I not fulfill this indispensable duty, but I gave you offence in an uninterrupted series of wicked actions; and you, infinite Majesty, offended, outraged by this filthy worm, this revolting rottenness, instead of destroying and annihilating it, instead of blasting it and despatching it to the depths of hell's abyss, you wait patiently for me, carry me in your arms, hold me to your breast, which I tear at it in my frenetic rage. My Father, the thought of it overwhelms me. No, you never ceased to speak to me in my heart, which was hard and insensitive only towards you. The further I distanced myself from you, the closer you pressed at my heels. You were the tender and dear father who does not cease to support and embrace his well-beloved son who grows angry in his frenzy against the benevolent hand which he fails to recognize, as he has lost the use of reason. My God, what devotion, what love can I summon to make amends for so many outrages, and how can I ever make up for such excesses?

And so I am convinced that I have never really loved you. But whom did I love in your place? The devil. Yes, it is the devil who has been my god, it is to him I have prostituted my whole being! See then how I have fulfilled the end for which I was created: I have hated my Creator, or at least I have acted just as if I hated him, and I have delivered myself over to the devil as his slave. And it is a monster like this, O my God, that you wish to claim as your own and have admitted into your sanctuary, whom soon you will invest with your priesthood. My God, what language is there to express what this infinite, incomprehensible goodness means to me? My head is prostrate in the dust, my lips press the earth, my soul is emptied, I can do no more. My God, double, triple, increase my strength a hundred fold that I may love you, not merely as much as I can, that is nothing, but that I love you as much as did the saints, as much as your holy Mother loved and loves you. My God, that is not enough, and why I

should I not love you as much as you love yourself? That cannot be, I know, but to desire it is not impossible, for I form it in all sincerity in my heart, with all my soul. Yes, my God, I would like to love you as much as you love yourself; this then is how I may undertake to make reparation for my past ingratitude.

I return to my theme. You gave me intelligence, will, memory a heart, eyes, hands, in a word all my bodily senses, all my soul's faculties, you gave me all these things for yourself, to use them for your glory, for your unique, your greater glory.

Let us see, face without flinching, enter fully into the details. I can but grow in knowledge of the extent of my odium, and of the extend to which you are good, merciful, etc. etc. etc. etc.

My God, that is all over henceforth and for my whole life. You, you alone will be the sole object to which will tend all my affections and my every action. To please you, act for your glory, will be my daily task, the task of every moment of my life. I wish to live only for you, I wish to love you alone and all else in you and through you. I despise riches, I trample honours under foot; you are my all, replacing all else. My God, my love and my all: *Deus meus et omnia*.

On man's end.

Once again I made a prayer on the theme of man's end, an inexhaustible wellspring which will not run dry though I pray it all my life; but I will not stop to transcribe the thoughts God gave me, as I perceive that that would take me too long, even though I wrote very fast. I will note only that I thought of God as doing for me much more than he has done for others; gratitude filled me as I admired the wholly merciful plan he has followed in my regard, and my gratitude grew all the more when I considered that my innumerable infidelities have not deflected him at all from these merciful plans for me, in this but little resembling the most outstanding benefactors one could mention, who in the end grow weary of helping ingrates and withdraw their donations from those who obstinately refuse to take any profit from them. My good God, on the contrary, seemed to redouble and did in fact redouble his graces, even as my sins grew and acquired fresh heights of malice. He put up with me, he affected not to see the damnable injuries that I continually inflicted on him; never changing, he opened to me his loving heart. Monster that I was, instead of hastening to consume within it all my crimes, I cruelly wounded it; and still God offered it to me full of love, ready to receive me, urging me to enter, etc. How long did it last, this prodigious scene of

love on the one hand, of barbarity, folly on the other? ... I dwelt on this subject in some detail. Thus, I thought how I was created by God with a sensitive soul, a tender heart, loving, generous. All this was for God and my own good; my special talent it was to turn it against God and to my own detriment. He placed me in a Christian family with good example abounding before my very eyes. And so I passed through the various situations the Lord placed me in, among them there are some which, by reminding me of God's goodness, give me a clear perception that his way of acting in my regard is a way of predilection, among others he had me spend 3 years under the direction and regularly in the company of a holy priest, who died in the odour of sanctity, and whom he endowed with the heart of a brother towards me, so much did he love me. I gave myself up to these thoughts, as I saw these graces as a continuance of creation, as if God, after he had formed me, had taken me by the hand and given me these successive experiences, saying: I created you to love me, serve me, etc.; I do more, feeble creature that you are, I insert you here and there, so that you may achieve that end more easily, whether through the helps that these situations afford, or through the motives that they may be apt to suggest ... It is with bitterness that I arrived at the conviction that all my life I had abused so many favours. Even so, God having kept to his plan, having so to speak pursued me until he recaptured me, me the black sheep, me the disgusting leper, me etc.; I had to conclude that God has some special plans for me, that he has some plan for me for his glory, etc.; his way of acting is sufficient evidence of this. But woe betide me, woe betide me, if by new infidelities I end up making him lose patience! For, after all, I must really grasp that, whatever be his plans for me, he can only be using me as an instrument of his omnipotence, an omnipotence that he wishes to emphasize even more by making use of what is most abject on earth; but at the end of the day, he may no longer have any use for this instrument so wanting, so insignificant in itself, and then what will become of it? It will be thrown on the fire, the eternal fire. And his justice, for all that it comes late, will not be any the less rigorous; on the contrary, it will be all the more severe because it has been delayed. My God, do not let anything like this happen to me. I acknowledge that I am quite unworthy of all your mercies, but could it be possible that after seeking me for so long when I was fleeing from you, you would no longer want me when I came back? I am too happy, Lord, that you would really want to furnish me the means to do something for your glory in reparation for the outrages I have done for so long a time. You created me for yourself, I want only to be yours, to work for you, live and die for you, See already it is several years that I have been harkening to your voice.

Speak again, Lord, and you will be obeyed, you will be obeyed in life and in death, etc.

On the use of creatures.

I meditated on the use I had made of creatures, who were given me only that I might come the more easily to God. It was easy to see that I have been making bad use of them all my life, at least up to the time of my conversion. Far from using them for their true purpose, I made of them my last end, they were my only concern, I took pleasure only in them. Instead of resting in God and rejoicing in him, and using creatures only as means, I rested in the creature, I rejoiced in the creature, and I was so to speak happy to make use of God, only making use of him and glancing in his direction as it were in passing⁵⁶.

The resolution I took is henceforth to make no use of “free” creaturely things, i.e., those which there is absolutely no necessity to use, as are things like food, housing, rest, clothing; to use others only with indifference, i.e., to be indifferent towards them and use them only so far as I recognize that they will bring me to God, their sole end as well as mine. I will make every effort to be indifferent as to health and sickness, good or bad reputation, riches or poverty, honour or disgrace, not desiring and willing anything at all except when the glory of God and the salvation of souls might point to one rather than the other of these things.

And since I have perceived for a long time now that one of the biggest obstacles to my spiritual progress is my over-readiness to give my heart to creatures, may all too susceptible enjoyment of friends whom I see to excel in good qualities, that my attachment for them has too large a place in my soul, in a word that I do not sufficiently oppose nature in this tendency to love in my heart what I find to be lovable, I will make efforts to overcome myself in this matter as in all the rest, so that I might reach the state, recommended so strongly by the Fathers of the spiritual life, of perfect liberty of heart.

On sin.

The meditation on sin did not move me in any sensible or extraordinary way. I don't know if I should attribute this to distractions in my place of retreat due to my hosts' charity and the extreme affability of the excellent bishop who is so eager to impose hands on me⁵⁷ and wanted

⁵⁶ Marginal note: “This thought comes from Father Judde.”

⁵⁷ Archbishop J.F. de Demandolx.

to do me the honour of visiting me in my cell, an example that was imitated shortly afterwards by his vicar general; or whether the thought of my sins and the horror they inspire in me being continually with me, and especially after my having devoted myself to them to the exclusion almost of all else during the days of retreat I had in Paris immediately before coming to Amiens, my soul could not be moved by familiar thoughts which do in all truth bitterly afflict it but without emotion. It does happen though, and not infrequently, that the grief of having offended so good a God, one who in spite of my iniquities has poured out on me so many gifts, penetrates me vividly, even to the point of shedding tears of compunction and especially in holy communion; but this state does not depend on my will, and it was not given me today. The thought that comes most frequently to me is that I am the greatest sinner I know. It isn't an exaggeration; I have the proof to hand in the memory of my numerous sins and the bad use made of so many graces that others who have perhaps committed more sins than I ever enjoyed. So I acknowledge that I merit all the punishments of divine justice, and I humbly accept them. It is also from this conviction of my unworthiness that is born a feeling profoundly imprinted in my soul and that I savour several times a day and whenever the occasion presents itself, namely that I am to see myself in the house of the Father of the family only as a vile slave, whom the excessive goodness of the Master puts up with, despite his unworthiness, so as to serve his children in the lowest kind of work. So, when I have time to reflect, I joyfully give to the least of men what to speak in human fashion he would have no right to ask of me, but which I acknowledge is due to him, for I look on him as the son of the house, while I am but the slave, made to serve for his amusement, etc., in spite of my repugnance.

On death.

I recognized, as I meditated on death, that I would not die cheerfully at this moment. I looked for the reason for this repugnance, I carefully examined whether I had something on my conscience, something that could disturb it, etc. After a rigorous examination, it seemed to me that if I were certain I would die during that day, I could make no more preparations than those I was already engaged in; that after the rigorous examination I had made of all my sins, and the pains I had taken to elicit, with the help of grace, a perfect contrition, it remained only for me to abandon myself to God's mercy and rest myself on the bosom of his paternal goodness. However, as this repugnance persevered, I went deeper, I searched in the depths of my heart, etc. The result of these

researches is that I cannot hide from myself that there is in me too much attachment to life, that the natural horror of death has too strong a hold on me and is not, by any means, as subjugated as it should be, etc. I also found another reason, namely, that, recognizing that I am so frighteningly vulnerable before divine justice, and not seeing so to speak yet any work of mine to offer to his justice to counterbalance my numerous sins, I would be sad to die before I had been able to put together some little thing to offer to the sovereign Judge, when he requires of each one a rigorous account of his works. What persuades me that this factor really accounts quite largely for this repugnance I have for dying, is that it seems to me I have no fear of it when I envisage it as happening through martyrdom or in a hospital in service to the victims of the plague.

I also dwelt on another thought, which should cure me of the desire I had to be loved by all those I love. Suppose, I said to myself, that after enormous efforts, etc., I managed at last to be universally loved by all those whose friendship might be pleasing to my self-love, will their love stand the test of this separation? Will I find many with a heart of the same temper as mine, and who will go on loving even after death? I would be a fool to think it. Once dead, they will fly from me with horror, and the world will go its way, while I rot in the tomb and those, whose friendship was most important to me, will be perhaps the first to say: what is the use of regrets, he is well off where he is, our tears won't bring him back to life, etc. How full of meaning are these words of the Imitation: *Ab omnibus oportet te aliquando separari, etc. ... illum dilige et amicum tibi retine, qui omnibus recedentibus te non relinquet nec patietur in fine perire.* (I. II. c.7, v.1).

On judgment.

What struck me most in the meditation on judgment is the soul's solitude on its exit from the body, encompassed by its Judge, enfolded on all sides by God's immensity; no one may answer on its behalf, no intercessor be admitted; one-to-one with God, its works will speak and nothing else. Where are my works, I ask myself. To my horror perhaps none of those on which I am counting are admissible. And then what will become of me? Merciful God, give me a little more time, *patientiam habe* in me, and with the help of your grace *omnia reddam tibi* (Mt. 18, 26). Grant that after I have worked hard, if not long, for your glory, I may give my life for your name; there lies all my hope.

In the meditation on the last judgment, I saw myself abashed at the sight of an infinite number of men who have done infinitely less evil than

I, although receiving infinitely less graces. I was more than ever convinced of the necessity of acting in all my actions only for God, without getting back anything for myself or thought for men's opinions. I have passed judgment on my actions, and notwithstanding my prejudice in my own favour, I found them wanting. Good God, what does that count compared with the judgment of Him who sounds the deepest depths of conscience? and what shame in the presence of the whole universe! Those whose plaudits I have gone after will be the first to mock my folly; and God, as he effaces them from the book of life, will say to me: fool, what did you think you were doing? Those same works which are this day your shame and confusion, had they been done with no admixture, no alloy, solely to please me, etc., would have had the value of treasures of eternal glory. But vanity, etc. has rusted their substances, etc. You had your plaudits on earth, etc. you have had your reward: *Vana vanis*. To avoid a catastrophe of the sort, I will apply myself with an extreme care and in my rule of life I will take efficacious measures to ensure absolutely that in all my actions, even the most neutral, I act solely to please God. I will try to act in such a way that the little good I have the happiness to accomplish escapes the sight of men, to whose praises and criticisms alike I will try to be indifferent. I will take myself often in spirit before God's judgment seat, during the course of my activities, so that this salutary thought may purify my intention, etc.

On hell.

On hell. No, I do not seem to be able to relish and find profit in the great truths that ought to throw a soul that has committed so many sins into confusion. As I have remarked elsewhere, death, judgment, hell are not a nourishment that is suited to my present state. I hope I am in a state of grace, and definitely I must believe it, as I draw near to the moment and give my consent to have hands imposed on me, on my spiritual father's advice. The soul, vast as it may be, cannot absorb so many different objects, or at least they cannot all at the same time make an equal impression on it. Preoccupied at this time with the great marvels that God in his omnipotence is ready to work in it, moved almost exclusively by sentiments of love, it is only with extreme reluctance that it tears itself away from that sweet occupation to surrender itself to fear, terror, etc. So it was in vain that I sought to put it in the depths of hell, in the shadowy dungeon that divine justice had prepared for it; in vain did I bury it beneath pitch, sulphur, devouring fire, the gnawing worm, devils of all description, etc.; I was soon obliged to come and bring it back to the feet of the altars, beside the innocent Victim which in a few days time it

will immolate for the remission of its sins, etc. Here is this horrible place, I said to it, where reprobate souls hate God and never cease to curse him, etc.; it is not made for me, it replied, as I love him, this good God, this merciful God, more than myself, as I would rather die a thousand times than offend him, as I consecrate to him my life and all that I am, that I wish to use and consume only in his service. Why spend in the company of devils the little time left to me to converse with my Master who is soon to place himself within my power; it is his voice I want to listen to, it is his orders, inspirations that I want to hear, it is his love that I want to nourish me. The language of terror no longer speaks to me; love alone has power over me. I must prepare a dwelling for my well-beloved; it is love, love alone that must bear the entire cost.

In any case, I have never needed the idea of hell to bring me to God; I have never been able to bring myself to dwell on it in my acts of contrition. When I ignored God, fear of hell did not hold me; now that I have come back to him [by a quite different road than fear of hell], even were there no hell I would want to love my God and serve him all my life.

But I am nonetheless grateful to the Lord for this, that he snatched me from that place of punishment, and in my impotence to do anything for him, I will direct against his enemy, in favour of his children, all that depends on me. I will spend my life in rescuing as many of the devil's victims as I can, I will devote myself without let to save souls: *Docebo iniquos vias tuas* (Ps. 50, 15).

On the prodigal son.

Meditation on the prodigal son. To my shame, this parable never applied to anyone better than it does me. I left the house of my father, after having, even while I still lived there, heaped up every sort of bitterness on my father. I wasted my patrimony, if not with the daughters of Babylon, as the Lord, with inconceivable goodness, has always preserved me from kind of stain, at least it was in the tents of sinners that I made my dwelling on my exit from the house of my father. I wandered eventually through arid deserts; and, reduced to beggary, I ate and fed myself on the food destined for the pigs, whose company I had freely chosen. Did the thought even occur to me of going back to my father, this good father whose excessive tenderness I had so often put to the test? No, he had to come to me himself, thus crowning his gifts, to lift me up, and rescue me all heedless as I was, or rather he had to come and get me out of the mire in which I was immersed and from which I could not extract myself unaided. I hardly ever even conceived the wish to leave aside my

rags and put on again my nuptial robe. O blindness! Forever blessed, O my God, be the sweet violence that in the end you did to me! Without this master-stroke, I would still be wallowing in my sewer or perhaps have perished there; and in that case, what would have become of my soul? O my God, don't I have every reason to devote myself entirely to your service, to offer you my life and all that I am, so that all that is in me may be employed and spent for your glory? For by how many titles do I belong to you? Not only are you my Creator and Redeemer, as you are all men's, but you are my special benefactor and applied your merits in an altogether special way to me; my generous friend, you forgot all my acts of ingratitude to help me as powerfully as if I had been always faithful to you; my tender father, who carried this rebel on your shoulders, warmed him against your heart, washed his wounds, etc. Good God, merciful Saviour, a thousand lives employed in your service, sacrificed to your glory, would be the least compensation your justice would be entitled to demand of me. May the desire to make up for my impotence to render you what I acknowledge I owe you, etc.

This meditation leads naturally to a consideration of what one could do to make satisfaction to a divine justice so cruelly offended. It is true that the father of the family places no conditions at all on the pardon he gives his prodigal son; but over and beyond that we may presume that he would have demanded a rigorous penance of this son, if after so generous a pardon he had dared to fall again into his first disorder, Scripture clearly lays down for us that we have to, that it is indispensable to lead a mortified, penitential, crucified life so as to make reparation for our past sins, to produce in a word worthy fruits of penance: *Facite fructos dignos paenitentiae* [Luke 3, 8]. Adam, David and other penitents had after being forgiven to do penance. And all the saints understood it in that sense: there is not one of them who was not a model in this sense. Have I less sins than they to expiate, or do I really claim to have a better understanding of the Saviour's teaching? Penance must be a set-off for the pains of hell: *paenitentia compendium ignium aeternorum*, says Tertullian. May I never lose sight of the fact that the debtor who deserves a cancellation of debts is the one who does all he can to satisfy his creditor. In my state of impotence to satisfy the immense debts I have unhappily contracted, I must make a firm resolution to do at least all that depends on myself, in so far as when all life's actions are informed by this spirit of mortification we have an excellent means of uprooting entirely all the bad habits and disorderly inclinations of corrupt nature. Thus, to obviate faults against humility, not only must I repress on all occasions the sallies of pride, study to have no longer my own will in anything,

depend in all things on the will of my superiors, but as well live in dependence on my equals and inferiors, and do everything they ask of me, provided that what they ask be permitted and that it costs me but the pain and humiliation of rendering them service, looking upon myself, as I noted elsewhere, as their slave, etc.

I will follow the same line of reasoning for the other virtues. I will fight to the death against fastidiousness, sensuality; and to that end, as well as denying the senses what they seek with so much insistence, I will chastise my body, both by depriving it of the things that it likes best, and by inflicting on it various punishments of which it stands most in horror, such as the ch[ain] at least three days a week, and the disc[ipline] at least once, Friday, if possible. I will take care to continue to have the latter imposed as penance, so as to give short shrift to all the feeble excuses that the extreme repugnance I have for this salutary exercise may insinuate, as I have already experienced to my shame; besides this adds a very real merit and a very great value in the eyes of God, namely obedience, apart from the fact that a work of sacramental penance makes satisfaction in a quite different way from a work of mortification that is simply voluntary, etc. I will also keep up the Friday fast and the other ones. But for all that, I will take as my guide what is contained in or I may add to my rule.

After these meditations on the purgative way and the holy resolutions that grace inspired me with, I applied myself to consider O.L.J.C. the lovable model to whom I must, as is my desire with his grace, conform myself. I meditated on him as my redeemer, head, king, master, model and judge.

If anyone has a greater need of redemption than I, this poor sinner and ungrateful creature who was for so long in a state of revolt, I may perhaps allow him to believe himself more obligated than I to Jesus the Saviour for having rescued him. But seeing the graces which have been given me and which I have profaned, and in spite of which I have sinned, I acknowledged myself as the man who stood in most need of redemption and [here the text ends].

96. To Mrs de Mazenod, in Aix. Bouches-du-Rhône⁵⁸.

Eugene begins his retreat. He will be ordained December 21. He asks for prayers and to be forgiven any hasty words that may have hurt his mother.

L.J.C.

Amiens, December 8, 1811.

Dear, darling mother,

I am only going to write you a few lines as I am on the most important retreat of my life, in which I must dialogue alone with God on matters of eternal import; by rights I should not be writing to you at all, but I really had to let you know that your Eugene, this poor miserable sinner the sum of whose iniquities are known to God alone, will of a surety in a few days time be vested with the most eminent dignity on the face of the earth or even in heaven. I will not dwell on it further, dear mother, but sum it all up in a word: pray for your son, and have others pray for him too, every saintly person you know. God knows with what love and expressions of tenderness and gratitude I shall offer for you yourself, your sanctification, and even your earthly happiness, that holy Victim who is always heard on account of his infinite dignity. Dear mother, be one with me on Christmas Eve, join in the holy mysteries in Aix while in Amiens, in the most fervent of communities⁵⁹, I celebrate them for you; let each of us for our own part speak our minds to our good Master who assuredly will be quite unable to say no on such a wonderful day; be sure, he will pay off all our debts, yes, I will ask him this with confidence when in his infinite, incomprehensible mercy, he places himself in a way in my power, I shall speak to him too of our mother and many others too, but do not let us yield just yet to the feelings such thoughts awaken in our soul, the time has not yet come to pour out what the Lord is working within me. So, dear mother, I am going back now on retreat, but before finishing off this letter, I throw myself at your feet and ask your pardon for any hasty words through which, while they never had any place in my heart, I may at some moments in my life have brought sadness to that dear mother whom I love and always have loved more than myself; you know my heart too well to be deceived, but it is nonetheless

⁵⁸ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB 1-7.

⁵⁹ He will be celebrating his first three masses of Christmas in the chapel of the Dames of the Sacred Heart, cf. Leflon, *op. cit.*, I, p. 393.

true that I have sometimes forgotten myself, and that is what upsets me and brings me to reiterate the excuses I have made to you a thousand times in the secret of my soul.

I bid you now an affectionate farewell, dear mother, and hold you tenderly to my heart which is all yours after God. You know the ordination takes place on the 21st, the feast of St. Thomas the Apostle. Hands will be laid on probably between 8:00 and 10:00 a.m. A double dose of prayers that day.

Your reply can reach me only in Paris, where I shall be returning on the first day of the year.

97. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix. Dept. des Bouches-du-Rhône⁶⁰.

Eugene is "a priest of Jesus Christ". Emotion and tears. Feelings of gratitude. Blessings.

L.J.C.

Amiens, [December 21, 1811].

Dear, darling mother, the miracle has been wrought: your Eugene is a priest of Jesus Christ. That one word says everything; it contains everything. It really is with a sense of deepest lowliness, prostrate in the dust, that I announce such a huge miracle worked in such a great sinner as myself. Dear mother, I have not the strength to say more. Every moment is precious in the state in which the grace of such a tremendous sacrament has placed me; I have to stay in a state of total recollection to savour what it pleases God in his goodness to have me taste in the way of happiness, consolations, etc. What shall I say? the tears are flowing, or rather streaming down; they ought to flow for ever, as they take their source in the tenderest of loves and are simply the expression of a most just gratitude, a feeling I will bring with me into blessed eternity.

I leave you now, dear, darling mother. I have three days still to get used to the idea that I am a priest and prepare to celebrate the divine mysteries on the delightful night our lovable Saviour is born in a stable. I was on retreat from the first day of Advent; it was none too long to prepare the ways, to open my heart to the best of my ability for his coming in me. I pray I have not placed any obstacle to the fulness of his spirit which he was disposed to pour out in me by the grace of ordination!

⁶⁰ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB 1-7.

But I am finishing, with an affectionate farewell and with congratulations on what I am. If I am but faithful, I will be your glory for all eternity! But that is a thought that would lead me too far afield. Goodbye everyone; I hold you all tight to my heart. And yes, I am going to continue, kneeling on my two knees before my crucifix, and give you all my blessing, begging the Lord whose unworthy minister I am, to bring your virtues to flower and perfection and pour out continually in your souls the abundant fruits of his grace, which he merited for us by shedding his blood on Calvary. May his peace, his holy peace, be always with you.

98. [Feelings after priestly ordination. Letter to Mr. Duclaux]⁶¹.

Feelings of joy, fear, confidence, sadness, love and thanksgiving. Eugene receives enough graces to "make a great saint".

[December 21, 1811]

My good friend d'Argenteuil⁶² urged me, at the time of his own ordination, not to forget to write down what my feelings were when my own turn came. As I think I have captured them in the letter I have just written to Mr. Duclaux, my spiritual father, I shall now make a copy of it.

Very dear and beloved Father, I am writing this on my knees, prostrate, overwhelmed, stunned, to share with you what the Lord, in his immense, incomprehensible mercy, has just accomplished in me. I am a priest of Jesus Christ; I have already for the first time offered the awesome sacrifice with the Bishop. Yes, it is I, it really is I, the wretched sinner whose turpitudes you are familiar with, who has immolated the immaculate Lamb, or at least he has immolated himself through my ministry. Dear Father, I fancy I am dreaming when I bring to mind what I am. Joy, fear, confidence, sadness, love enter one after the other into my heart. The thought uppermost in my mind and that I get quite lost in is this: so this is how my God in his goodness avenges himself for all my acts of ingratitude, by doing so much for me that, God though he may be, he can do no more. After this, could I ever again be tempted to offend him? Truly this is the moment to reply: it were better to die a thousand deaths.

⁶¹ Orig.: Postulation Archives, DM VI-1. Rey (I, 130-131) gives a copy of this letter but changing some of the words; e.g., at the beginning he writes: "woes" in place of "turpitudes".

⁶² A seminarist Eugene names in the list of seminarians for whom he offers his third mass, cf. *infra*, doc. 100, n.65.

My letter could not go off yesterday. O my dear Father, there is only love in my heart. I am writing at a time when my heart overflows, to coin an expression of the Apostle's in a moment like the one I am experiencing. If the underlying sorrow for my sins, that is always with me, still persists, it is also true that love has changed its nature. Is it possible, my beloved, that I could have offended you? How can it be that I offended you, you who at this moment seem to me so wonderful? Can it really be that a heart that loves you as much as mine could bring the smallest frown to your face! And two streams of tears flow with peace and sweetness, and the soul in a state of ravishment it cannot put into words, any more than the other things I am experiencing. I do not know what it is, I do not know how it is. But one thing I see with clarity is that I shall be deserving of hell if ever I deliberately offend against God in his goodness, even in the most venial way.

I am a priest! You have to be one to understand what it means. Just to think of it sends me into transports of love and gratitude, and if the thought of my sinfulness recurs, love abounds all the more. *Jam non dico vos servos*, [Jn 15,15] etc. *Dirupisti vincula mea. Tibi sacrificabo hostiam laudis* [Ps. 115, 16-17] etc. *Quid retribuam Domino*, [Ps. 115, 12] etc., like so many arrows that pierce this heart that has been so cold until this day.

If meeting God in holy communion has such an effect on me, [p.3] how will I be able to say holy Mass on Christmas Eve? It will be evident to everybody what the Lord is doing within my soul. This is the only thing that bothers me; it has brought me to the pitch of wanting, I dare not say asking, that I will not be affected so perceptibly and for so long a time.

Starting with the days preceding ordination and especially after ordination, I think I know O.L.J.C. better. What would it be like to know him as he is! Dear Father, please pray that I do not make myself unworthy of so many graces. I am receiving more than enough to make a great saint, pray that I shall become one; please say a Mass for that intention. The week shall not go by without my repaying this new debt, etc. But happily our Master's generosity has enabled me to pay, etc., etc.

99. [Note to Father de Sambucy, master of ceremonies at Eugene's first Masses]⁶³.

Suggestions for the Mass and ceremony of first blessing.

[Amiens, December 24, 1811]⁶⁴

Father de Mazenod requests Mr. de Sambucy to be so kind as to have the *Veni creator* sung in an unhurried manner.

During the moving ceremony of imparting of first blessing, please have the psalm *Credidi propter quod*, etc., sung as in the seminary, preceded by the antiphone *Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus quae retribuit mihi*, that is repeated at every verse and has a quite ravishing effect on the newly-ordained priest because of all the feelings it gives rise to in his heart.

100. My Mass Intentions⁶⁵.

[For December 25-27, 1811].

First mass, Christmas Eve: for myself⁶⁶. To obtain forgiveness of my sins, love of God above all things, and perfect love of neighbour. Utmost sorrow for having offended such a good and lovable God. The grace of making reparation for my faults by a life wholly and solely employed in his service and for the salvation of souls. The Spirit of J.C. Final perseverance, and even martyrdom or at least death while tending victims of the plague, or any other kind of death for God's glory or the salvation of souls.

(63) Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, LM-Sambucy. Father Louis de Sambucy-Saint-Estère was master of ceremonies at the 1811 national council, cf. J. Leflon, *op. cit.*, I, p. 381.

(64) The ceremony of the first blessing was held after the 10:00 a.m. mass. In the *Annales* of the house of the Dames of the Sacred Heart of Amiens it is stated: "December 25, 1811, at midnight Mr. de Mazenod and Mr. Desportes, who had been ordained at the priesthood some days before, said their Mass in the chapel of the Holy Virgin, and afterwards at 10:00 a.m., after high Mass, they carried out the ceremony of the imparting of first blessing."

(65) Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, DM IV-1: 1811: Sentiments, pp. 4-7. We have another sheet where the intention for the first mass is practically the same as here, while that for the third Mass is considerably more detailed: after his family, Eugene lists Fathers Duclaux his director, Magy, Isnardon, Beylot, priests from Aix and Marseilles, everyone of his confessors, missionaries, several seminarists, the Zinelli's, various friends from Aix and Sicily, including the Canizzaro's religious women, Cardinals Dugnani and Mattei and lastly all his future penitents.

(66) At the top of this page Eugene added: "At the ordination Mass, the same intention as for Christmas Eve."

A holy freedom of spirit in God's service, great purity of heart and intention in all my actions, complete detachment from creatures. Deliverance from every thought against the holy virtue of purity, and from the anxiety such thoughts leave in their wake. Likewise deliverance from thoughts against charity, rash judgments. Love of the cross of J.C., suffering and humiliation. Gentleness, patience. Lights for fruitful studies and due fulfillment of all my ministerial obligations, especially concerning confession and preaching. The grace of showing me his holy will: 1° as to the kind of ministry I am to take up, 2° in my every daily action, however trivial-seeming, and a constant attention to his interior voice that I might do nothing that is not in accordance with his good pleasure.

Second Christmas Mass: for the repose of the soul of my dearest grandmother.

Third Christmas Mass: for my father, mother, sister, two uncles, niece, brother-in-law, cousin, and all my other relatives *in globo*. For all their spiritual and temporal needs, but especially their conversion or final perseverance.

December 26, St. Stephen's Day: for my good friend Charles de Janson and all the deacons of God's holy Church. For their final perseverance and total devotion to the service of God and the Church.

27th, Feast of St. John.

101. General resolution. [Notes on predestination]⁶⁷.

Resolution to be wholly for God and neighbour, and seek the cross of Jesus Christ. Predestination.

[End of December, 1811]⁶⁸.

General resolution to be wholly God's and for all, to flee the world and all it may offer as sops, etc., to seek only the cross of J.C. and the penance due to my sins, to seize every opportunity that arises to mortify myself, trample nature under foot and deny it without letting up. As St. Peter says, I will not set my heart on any earthly thing: *Obsecro vos*

⁶⁷ Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, DM IV-1: 1811: Sentiments ... p.9.

⁶⁸ The text is undated but belongs to the end of 1811 as it is written on the last page of the notebook in which Eugene lists his intentions for the first masses.

tanquam advenas et peregrinos abstinere vos a carnalibus desideriis [1 Peter 2,11].

We cannot tell if we shall be judged worthy of love or hatred, that is true, but we do know that we can make sure of our election by our works; while St. Paul said that those whom God wished to save, whom he has predestined for his glory *quos praescivit et praedestinavit*, he has decided, ordained would resemble his son J.C., *conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui* [Rom 8, 29], or as another interpretation has it: those whom he has foreseen as destined to resemble his son J.C., he has predestined for his glory. Whichever way you put it, it is still conformity with J.C. that is the definitive sign of predestination as it is always infallibly either its effect or its cause.

Do we resemble J.C.? Do we imitate Jesus Christ with all our strength; do we live the life of J.C.? then we shall infallibly be saved.

Every other mark of predestination is highly equivocal, or can be reduced to the above.

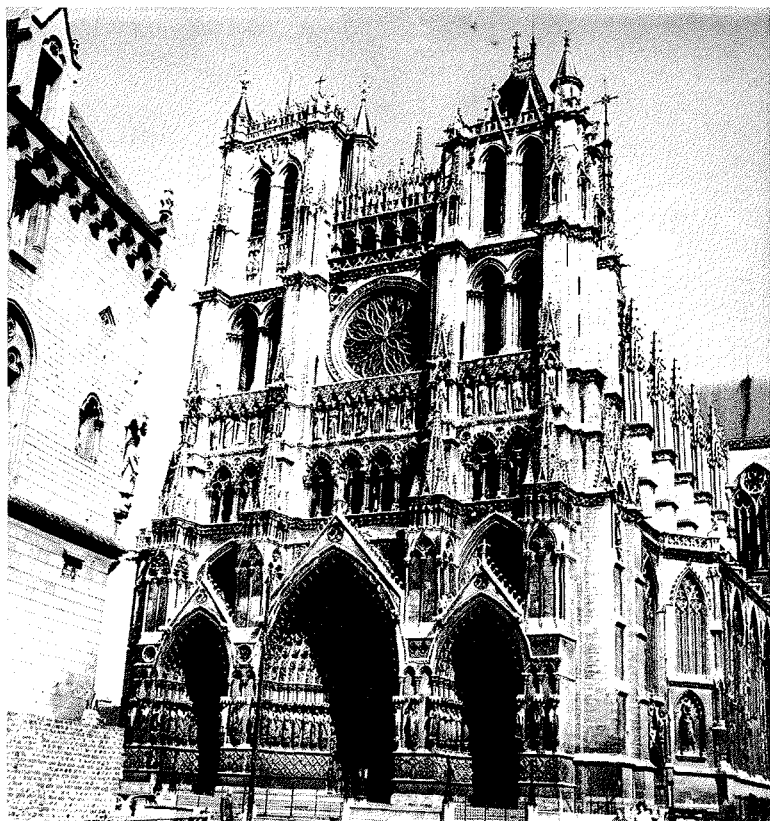
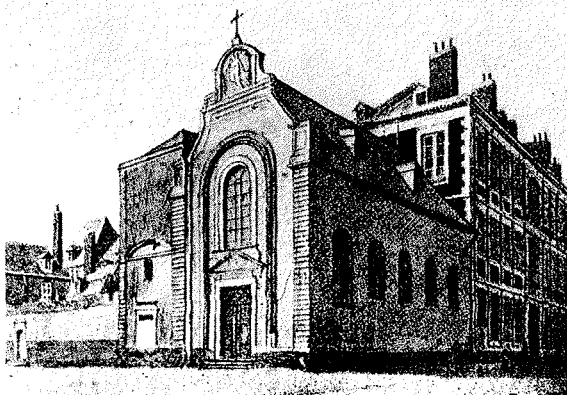


Bishop Jean-François Demandolx, who ordained Eugene to the priesthood on December 21, 1811.



The Major Seminary of Amiens where Eugene made his retreat in preparation for the priestly ordination in December 1811.

Chapel of the
Ladies of the
Sacred Heart
Boarding School
at Amiens where
Eugene
celebrated his
first Masses on
December 25,
1811.



Cathedral of Amiens where Eugene was ordained to the priesthood.

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