

Saint EUGENE de MAZENOD

# SPIRITUAL WRITINGS

1812 - 1856





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

Collection: *Oblate Writings XV*

**SPIRITUAL WRITINGS**  
**(1812-1856)**

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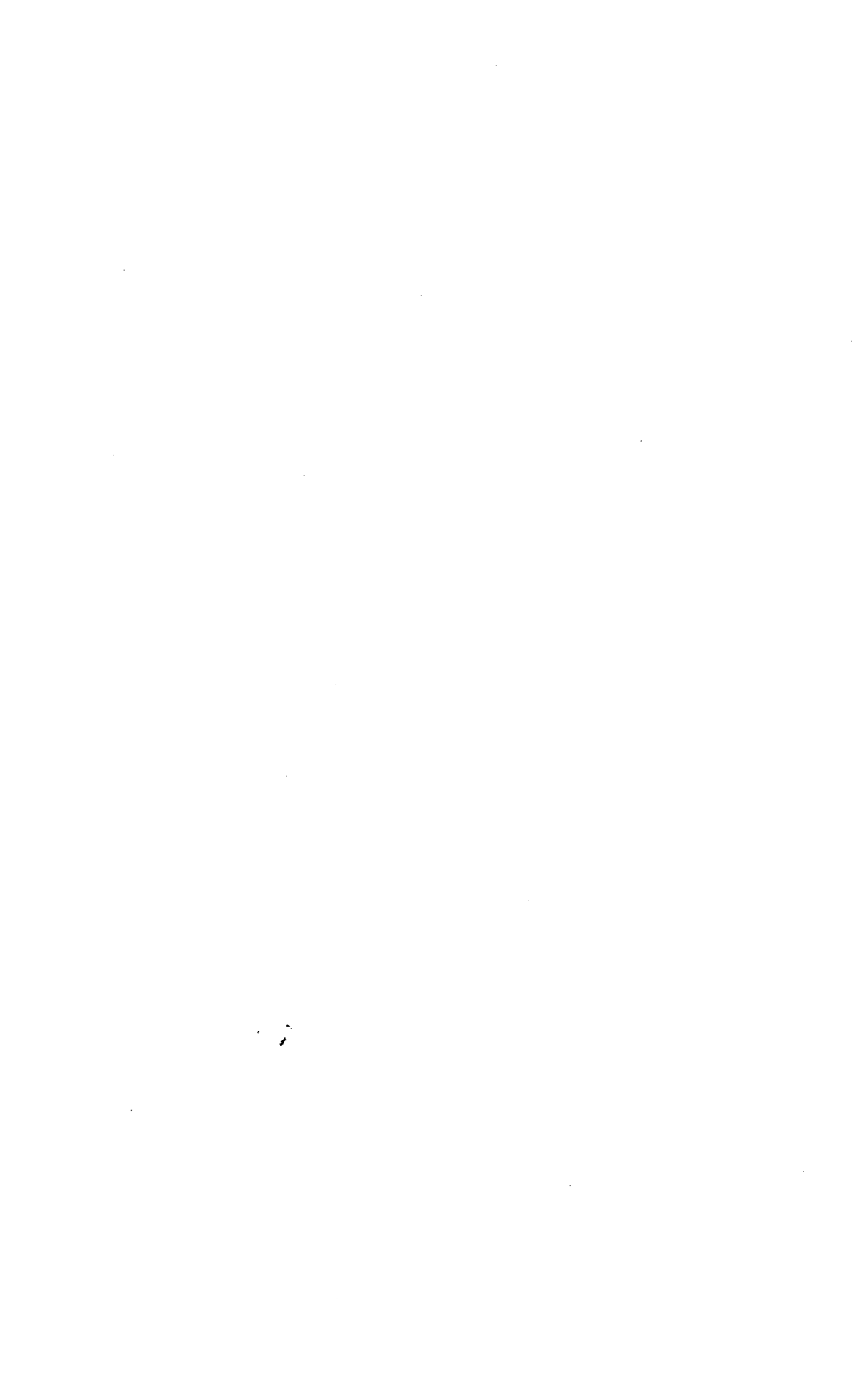




E. DE MAZENOD

Superieur de la Mission de Provence

*Father Eugene de Mazenod*  
*Superior of the Mission of Provence*  
*(Engraving made in Aix, in 1821, by Marius Reinaud)*



1812

## 102. On frequent communion.<sup>1</sup>

*Obligations flowing from frequent reception of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.*

[1812]<sup>2</sup>

Frequent reception of the sacred body and precious blood of J.C. imposes on me the following obligations:

1. To live as if on retreat, an interior retreat I mean, wholly taken up with the Spouse of my soul who deigns to make of it his permanent dwelling.

2. To recall frequently the enormous sins of my past life so as to cleanse myself of them ever more and more by an ever-growing hatred of them and offering them, rendered harmless by penance, to J.C. for him to see to their utter destruction and consume them forever in the burning brazier of his divine love whose seat is in his adorable Heart.

3. To avoid with scrupulous care every kind of voluntary fault, however small it might appear, for the sole reason that it saddens my God, my heart's first love, who has done such great things in me and for me.

4. Not to be satisfied simply with fulfilling the principal and absolutely necessary duties of my state in life, but to embrace joyfully and eagerly every practice of virtue and penance that could assist me to make progress towards the perfection that I still fall so dreadfully short of, to tend in short towards that perfection as if towards my natural element, and to be really convinced therefore, that any action, or some practice, however small, futile, lowly, puerile or common it may seem, may be of service to me to

<sup>1</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-5a, cah. 2: sujets de meditations, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> An undated text that might give the impression of being from his early days in the seminary when Eugene first had the opportunity of frequent communion. But it is located on p. 25 of the second notebook entitled: *Meditation Themes*. It seems to relate to meditation themes put before the seminarians in 1812. This page is thus to be dated in 1812. We publish it here because Eugene is clearly talking about himself and his state of soul at the time of his ordination retreat or shortly after, a period when he often speaks of his sinful life.

help me advance even a step along this sacred road, I must never look upon it as beneath me, but on the contrary seize upon it with joy as a means that my God's divine and fatherly Providence presents me with to escape from my state of tepidity and help me take wings towards him.

Am I to receive this immaculate Lamb into my heart, a victim offering himself for me, and who in an excess of love did pay in advance and with dreadful torments for the eternal death I have so often merited, to receive him only to subject him to injuries and scorn and think myself quit of every debt of honour, glory, love and gratitude simply because I stop short of dealing him the final blow in a fresh crucifixion? O lovable Saviour mine, adorable object of your heavenly Father's love, before whom in the abyss of their nothingness countless legions of the most sublime angelic Spirits lie prostrate, you ...

### **103. [Resolutions as director at the seminary of St. Sulpice].<sup>3</sup>**

*Eugene will stay on in the seminary as a director. Resolutions made to ensure that his deeds "will speak more loudly than my words."*

[January 1812]<sup>4</sup>

As it seems to be the Lord's will for me to stay on this year in the seminary and the purpose of my remaining on is to assist in maintaining in the house the spirit of piety that our Fathers sought assiduously to create, I will submit to what seems to be the design of Providence in my regard; and in order not to render unfruitful the ministry for which it destines me, I will strive to live in such a way that my deeds will speak more loudly than my words and suggestions.

With that in view, I will try with God's help to renew myself in the spirit of the priesthood, and my first step will be to impress upon myself that the priesthood is a state of perfection, which demands of those who have the happiness to be invested with it a scrupulous fidelity to the least movements of the Holy Spirit, an extreme horror of sin, however venial it

<sup>3</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-2.

<sup>4</sup> An undated text. It was written after ordination at the close of 1811, or more likely at the beginning of 1812, as Eugene says he will stay on "this year" at the seminary; this refers to the calendar year 1812, not the academic year 1812-13 since, in May, Eugene had decided to return to Aix after the seminarians' holidays; cf. letter to his mother and Emile, May 8, 1812.

may appear, great purity of heart and intention, in everything seeking God alone, his glory, the salvation of souls and our progress in the ways of perfection.

I will neglect none of the means that the masters of the spiritual life suggest for us to arrive at this goal, the only goal to which I must aspire.

For this reason, I firmly resolve to fulfill to the full my every duty: 1. as a priest, 2. as director, since I must act as one.

As a priest, I have certain duties of piety, certain duties as to study, and I must likewise give the same attention to the fulfillment of these various obligations.

My duties of piety consist: 1. in oraison, 2. holy mass, 3. divine office, spiritual reading, examination of conscience, prayer; the whole accompanied, preceded and followed by the holy practice of the presence of God.

1. As I know all too well that the major defect in my oraison comes from a failure to do sufficient preparation on the night before, from now on I will pay a lot of attention to changing my behaviour in this regard. My own experience should have convinced me of this over and above the constant teaching of the fathers of the spiritual life.

2. Immediately the lights have been lit, I will get up, rendering to God the things that are his in the way indicated in my personal programme. Then I will begin my preparations, still in my bedroom, for the holy sacrifice. After that I will take my place in the tribune and wait for 4:45 to sound to go down and get vested.

#### 104. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix.<sup>5</sup>

*Joy at celebrating mass. When he returns to Aix, Eugene will say mass for his mother and feed her "with the sacred bread which alone can give life."*

L.J.C.

Paris, January 9, 1812

I was anticipating, dearest, darling mama, writing you at greater length than will actually be possible, courtesy of dear Emile; but he came this

<sup>5</sup> Orig.: St. Martin des Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the section omitted, Eugene sends greetings to Monsignor Jauffret, Archbishop-designate of Aix, he speaks of a stole he has had made, of Emile Dedons' marriage and the lands at St. Laurent that ought to be sold, etc.

morning and warned me he would be stopping by tomorrow to pick up my letters. And it happens to be a busier time than usual right now; which means I must restrict myself to a few words of thanks for your lovely prayers on Christmas Eve. What a wonderful way for us to be united, over a great distance though it be! You can well imagine how much you were there in my heart and how earnestly I prayed for so good a mother. But, not satisfied with these first prayers that I repeat every day in the holy Sacrifice, my 3rd mass on Christmas Day itself was for you. I offered the second for [p. 2] our darling mama, as it was urgent to come to her aid, supposing her not to be already in glory. What a night, what a day! What days still to come every 24 hours! How long the time seems between one mass and the next! Why can one not repeat this wonderful sacrifice more than once a day? The time will come, dear mama, when we will offer it together. What happiness! I who was once fed with your substance, your milk, will in my turn present you with a food prepared by my ministry for God's children craving the sacred bread which alone can give life.

### **105. To Mrs. de Mazenod, in Aix. Dep. des Bouches-du-Rhône.<sup>6</sup>**

*When he returns to Aix, Eugene will be exclusively at the service of the Church. Nathalie's Christian upbringing.*

Paris, April 22, 1812

It really gets me down to see the tiresome problems your business affairs involve you in. Aren't you ever going to find a way out? But some solution will have to be found, for it is out of the question for you to go on being upset and worn out by them, and I myself will never be able to get involved, even if it means being reduced to eating nothing but stale bread. In the past I have already alerted you as to my intentions in this regard: they are simply the consequences of the obligations that my state of life lays upon me. Today's priests are not [p. 2] like those of old; we are priests for the Church alone and so every moment of our time is hers. Thus, every moment not employed in prayer, study or the exercise of the holy ministry would be so much time robbed from Him to whose service we are wholly

<sup>6</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. FB 1-8. In the part that is omitted, Eugene tells how he spent Holy Week; he asks his mother to have shelves ready for his library at the Enclos and to check if the collections of religious works are complete, etc.

consecrated, taking into consideration the whole extent of the obligations we take on. This is why no one should entertain any idea that on my return I shall be entering into the round of visits, and the observance of the so-called social niceties, etc., etc. All that sort of thing is out. My whole way of life has been thought out in advance, and nothing will make me change it, for I don't take a decision before thinking the matter out in God's presence and coming to see its rightness; after that the matter is closed. People may say I am uncivilized, a scoundrel even if they like; it's all the same to me, provided I am a good priest. Citing the examples of others, far from making me waver in my decision, will rather strengthen it. My conscience and God, these are my judges and the rule of my conduct ... [p. 4] Affectionate greetings to my darling little sister. I have meant to write her dozens of times but I have never been able to get around to it. I hope she won't find it in herself to be annoyed with me, knowing as she does how much she means to me; how I love her child and how often I have been consoled by her "good Jesus."<sup>7</sup> Take pains with that dear little soul's upbringing; mothers have more influence than one imagines on their children's eternal happiness through those first seeds they sow in their newborn hearts and by the example with which they accompany their lessons; I have some striking examples of this before my very eyes. I am so happy at all your happiness in this little one. I pray for her as for you all, every day of my life. Dear mama, with all my love.

## 106. [Retreat] at Issy.<sup>8</sup>

*Failure of holiday project to study English and Spanish, his need to discipline himself to grow in virtue. His lukewarmness. He would sooner die than be a bad priest. Humility, regard for the priesthood. Exemplary lives of his teachers and fellow-disciples.*

Issy, near Paris, August 1812

I was intending to use this holiday period to learn English and Spanish, with the idea that these two languages would be of use in my future ministry; but it looks as if this plan is doomed to failure. In any case,

<sup>7</sup> Eugene had written on January 17, 1812: "Nathalie [now 20 months old] loves to turn over the pages in books and find the pictures; when she finds one, she is as pleased as Punch and kisses them and says it is her good Jesus."

<sup>8</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-2.

it is only the former of these two languages that I will be missing out on, as I think I can learn the other one very easily, as soon as I decide to get down to it, as it has great similarities to Italian.

So I must find some other way to fill this time usefully; and the better part for me to choose is to go along with the desire the Lord is giving me of devoting some thought to my progress in piety, for fear that while showing others the way, I will go miserably astray myself.

The best way to achieve this goal is to meditate profoundly on God's law and all the obligations my vocation imposes, and by frequent self-scrutiny examine every aspect of my conduct, past and present, to see how far I have wandered from the duties that are mine to fulfill. I must courageously carry the investigation into the most secret recesses of my heart, and tear up, destroy, mercilessly consign to the fire everything I find that seems to be of a disorderly nature. It is high time I responded to these continual promptings of grace, which ask, nay demand what, notwithstanding a certain good will and a very lively interior desire, I even so continually hold back. I drag myself along in a slothful tepidity, while the Lord asks of me what I promised him and what, clearly, he has a right to ask of every priest, and of me especially more than any. As these holidays come as well at the end of the period of time I am to spend in this holy house, I must arouse all my energies to gather all the graces granted me, the host of good examples, holy instructions, all the good in short I ought to have amassed but have alas dissipated. There is perhaps still time to salvage something from this ruin for which I am responsible to my own great detriment.

The Church has all too much to lament in the numerous priests who bring down harm on her [p. 2] by their lack of awareness of the evils she suffers, who are themselves in a state of torpor and dampen down all the flames of divine love which they should be lavishing among the faithful, for whom they are the Lord's organs and instruments of his mercy. Is it my purpose to increase their number? God preserve me from such a fate. Better to die right now as I write these words.

But as it is clear — as experience shows all too well — that I would lose gradually the good dispositions in which it pleases the Lord to keep me, if my resolutions were not established on a solid foundation, I am convinced above all that the house of my salvation must be built on humility, as the Lord wishes to build on nothingness; after that I will concentrate on heightening the esteem I should have for the sublime dignity to which, albeit all unworthily, I have been elevated, and for the awesome obligations my sacerdotal character lays upon me.

These two points will be like the two hinges on which everything else must hang: what I am, what God had done for me, here is matter for meditation not only for the whole of my life but for all eternity.



The more I have been and remain a great sinner, the more must I strive to love God and bring others to love him, since notwithstanding my profound unworthiness God has not ceased to pour out on me some of the greatest graces it was in his power to confer, and I can show my gratitude for so many blessings, such great mercy only by doing all in my power to love him to the limits of my capacity, and in reparation for the glory and honour I have taken from him by my most serious fault, I must use all my strength, every means at my disposal and all my inner resources to bring others to love him.

A powerful means of persevering in these dispositions will be the memory of all the priestly virtues I saw practiced with such perseverance before my very eyes over the four years I have had the happiness of living in this seminary. Mr. Emery, Mr. Duclaux, the saint-like Mr. Duclaux, and all his other helpers, and the vast majority of their pupils, my dear fellow-disciples, will be all my life each one a helper, an invisible excitator, restraining me from demeaning myself, encouraging me to make progress. God, what virtues! How wretched I judge myself by comparison with all these holy clerics! Tharin, and Teysseyre, and Gosselin, with whom I was associated in the direction of this seminary when our Fathers were taken from us, all younger than I in years, but how far behind them I am in virtue. But we were students together, we grew up in the shadow of the same protecting wings, received the same instructions, shared the same advantages and examples; but as well as being more innocent than I and therefore more ready to receive the impressions of grace, how much more benefit they drew than I from the spiritual abundance in the midst of which we lived.

### **107. [Rule of life for his return to Aix].<sup>9</sup>**

*A priest's duties are many but it is also obligatory to take at least 6 hours sleep. Rule: an energetic rise, oraison, mass in a church in the town, study and breviary during the day.*

[August - September 1812]<sup>10</sup>

The duties of a priest have so multiplied; there are so many things to learn, things to do that the day is not long enough to do them justice; how

<sup>9</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-2.

<sup>10</sup> The text is undated. As Eugene composed the "rule of life" that is traditionally made in Sulpician seminaries on departure only in December, 1812, no doubt he drew up in advance some details before leaving Paris. We suggest August - September 1812 as a probable date as the rule is clearly intended for his life at Aix and was composed at a time when he still hoped to spend a lot of time at study. The same ideas are found in the letter to his mother dated September 24.

nice it would be if only a priest could do without sleep, but since it has pleased God to impose on him, as on the rest of mankind, the necessity of restoring his strength in sleep, he must submit to that decree of the Creator in a spirit of penance and make an offering of that state of vacuity that takes up so large a part of his life, like a person convinced in his heart of his own incapacity and seeing merit only in the blind execution of the will of the Master for whom he will never be anything but an unprofitable servant, whether his service be taking his rest or the working of miracles.

I stress this thought as I do have to reproach myself with not having up to the present given anything like enough time to sleep and I believe it is my duty at this point to call to mind Dr. Leynech's prescription<sup>11</sup> who fixed at least 7 hours as the amount of rest I ought to give my body, and his warning that I would soon become incapable of applying myself, and quite unfit for study if I did not submit to this iron law.

Toning down a little, but not without prudence, this harsh sentence which I have observed so badly up to the present, I will take six hours sleep.

As soon as I am awoken, I will make the sign of the cross as I give my heart to God and instantly, with not a minute's delay, I will jump out of bed so as not to begin the day with an act of sloth. I must remember that the second stroke of the bell never found St. Vincent de Paul in the same position as he was in at the first, and that he was punctilious in this obedience until the day he died.

It costs something, it is true, to leave one's bed so promptly, but it is precisely in that that its merit lies.

I will get dressed with due modesty occupying my mind with some holy thought or with the topic of my oraison, or with a consideration of the way Our Lord felt on waking, etc., with some shame as I reflect that these garments are a reminder to me that I have lost my innocence, etc.

I will put on my soutane in preference to any other form of dress, after kissing it out of respect, grateful to the Lord for the signal grace he has given in granting me the privilege of wearing his Church's holy livery. I must have such love for this form of dress that is distinctive of my state in life that I will never put it aside, even to go on a journey, unless the journey is an exceptionally long one and renders it impossible.

<sup>11</sup> No doubt the famous Dr. René Laennec (1781-1826).

Once fully dressed I will proceed to my oratory and stay there for the holy exercise of oraison which I will begin with the vocal prayer taken from Mr. Olier's works.

In the conviction that the only way a priest can sanctify himself is by prayer, every day I will spend at least an hour at this holy exercise.

If by chance it happens that I cannot get it all in in the morning, I will faithfully make it up during the day.

I will make it my practice to do my oraison immediately prior to mass, thus during winter or faced with the parochial custom of not opening the churches until shortly before six, I will begin oraison only at 5 so that I can proceed without any interval from oraison to the altar, and then, after vocal prayer, I will say matins and lauds and read some chapters of Holy Scripture.

On my way to the Church to celebrate the sacred Mysteries, I will take great care to remain totally recollected so that it can really be said that my prayer has not been interrupted.

Once arrived at the Church, I will pause in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament to make acts of love, thanksgiving, devotion, offering, sacrifice; in short, I will recapitulate the good thoughts and more important resolutions from my oraison, but in a summary manner as I should be sufficiently prepared for the Sacred Mysteries by oraison, towards the end of which I must dwell on the most holy Sacrifice that Jesus Christ will offer his Father through my ministry.

[p. 3] On my return home I will say Prime, reading the Martyrology at the appointed place, then read Holy Scripture for half-an-hour.

I will follow this, until lunch, with literary studies.

Before going down for that meal, I will say Terce.

After lunch, I will go back up and study theology. Before beginning, I will say Sext.

At two o'clock, None; at half-past-four, I lay aside my theology and Church history studies to say Vespers, followed by particular examen.

Dinner at five o'clock; compline at seven o'clock, then visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

Until nine, light and instructive reading. During the summer, Matins and Lauds.

At nine, spiritual reading for half-an-hour in the family circle, then evening prayer.

At ten, I withdraw to go to bed.

I will not neglect to say the rosary every day, but will make use for this purpose of the time spent in the streets going from one place to another, beginning in the morning when I return from Church after mass.

**108. To Mrs. de Mazenod, rue Papassaudy,  
near Place St. Honoré, in Aix, Bouches-du-Rhône.<sup>12</sup>**

*Eugene will live with his mother in Aix but will follow a rule that will require him to spend all his time at studies and seeking his neighbour's spiritual good.*

L.J.C.

From Issy, September 24, 1812

[p. 3] ... Before I finish off I want to give you advance warning that, by virtue of my very state in life, I am obliged to seek perfection, and in consequence to employ every means there is to achieve it, [p. 4] so it is essential I do not encounter any obstacles while living with you; to have the consolation of being beside a tenderly-loved mother will already be quite sufficient consolation for this nature of ours that seeks itself in everything; and so other than that I must be left to follow the rule I lay down for myself in line with my duties and obligations as I see them, both in respect of my relations with third parties, and the use I make of my time, the time I get up, how and what I eat, but especially I have to be as free from entanglement in temporal matters as if we did not have any lands or houses; this last stipulation is so important I would rather forsake everything than surrender it. After the first week or fortnight, nothing else can claim my time but my studies and my neighbour's spiritual good. Were I to come up against any obstacles to these two things, I would be obliged in conscience to flee even the family home, the diocese, the country, the very empire, and keep on running in a word until I found a place where I might freely exercise these two capital points of my vocation; I wanted to tell you something of this before my arrival so you will not be too surprised to see me taking up a way of life and following exercises that are not very common in these

<sup>12</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. FB 1-8. In the part omitted, Eugene speaks of various commissions, receipt of money, his return to Aix after the seminarians' holiday has ended on October 12, the room to be got ready for his servant Brother Maur, the lands at St. Laurent, etc.

days of laxity and lukewarmness; now I have run out of space and wish you a most affectionate farewell; I have said the holy mass for the happy couple.<sup>13</sup>

## 109. Rule drawn up on my retreat in Aix, December 1812.<sup>14</sup>

*Importance of a rule. Piety. Duties towards God: spirit of penance, prayer, mass, divine office, presence of God, ejaculatory prayer, oraison, visit to the Blessed Sacrament, examination of conscience, confession.*

December 1812<sup>15</sup>

*Si vis aliquid proficere noli esse nimis liber, sed sub disciplina cohibe omnes sensus tuos.* (Th. a Kemp. 1.1, c.21).

*Ne igitur hodie asperam ducas vitam, et cras mollem et delicatam, sed canonem unum retine, sicut etiam sancti fecerunt Patres qui ad quinquaginta et ultra annos suum non mutarunt canonem ac regulam* (St. Ephrem).

It has always been recognized in the Church, and by people wishing to reach perfection, that if one would reach and maintain oneself in it, one must submit to a fixed and invariable rule which, in its ceaseless subjugation of the disorders of the senses and the inconstancy that is native to the human will, was like a strict and rigorous Pedagogue who in his unbending strictness never permits his disciple to depart on frivolous pretexts from the rules that an enlightened wisdom has dictated to him.

<sup>13</sup> Emile Dedons, Eugene's cousin, got married on September 29 and went to live in Marseilles. Mrs. de Mazenod would have been left alone in the Joannis house had it not been for Eugene's arrival and the consequent abandonment of his plan to go and live in the Enclos. We do not know the exact day of his arrival in Aix but it was towards the end of October. On November 22 Mr. Duclaux had already received a letter from him written as he passed through Lyons. Mrs. de Mazenod had waited a long time for this moment. During the summer she received a letter from President de Mazenod, the first since 1807, and in her reply dated August 20 she says about Eugene: "Finally early in October I will have the happiness of embracing this dear child. The road he has taken has caused me to shed many tears. My appeals have had no effect as his vocation came from God and was not inspired by any human motive ..."

<sup>14</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-2. In this rule, certainly unfinished, Eugene speaks only of his duties towards God, nothing concerning his neighbour. Mr. Duclaux gave his unqualified approval to this rule, drawn up during Eugene's retreat at the major seminary of Aix, cf. letter to Eugene, February 23, 1813, in Rey, I, 152.

<sup>15</sup> In the margin of the first page, Eugene wrote: "This rule should have been drawn up last year at about this time, when I was making my retreat in preparation for receiving the priesthood; but I put off doing it until the time of my definitive return to Aix; so now here I am, let us get down to it."

It is as it were a compass of the soul's dispositions. From the greater or lesser fidelity with which one keeps it, it is easy to deduce whether it is fervour or tepidity that predominates, and one will never, if one makes use of this faithful monitor, if only one conserves some good will and desire to sanctify oneself, never, I say, will one go far astray, never will one entirely lose sight of the sole end to which we must all tend.

A rule of life is for every Christian like the witness and guarantor of holy resolutions and promises made to the Lord during the blessed time of a retreat, when [p. 2] more moved by the dangers to which it is continually exposed in the world, by the necessity of providing efficaciously for its salvation, despite the efforts of all around it, and no less again by the excessive mercies of its God, the soul in the profound consciousness of its gratitude made an oath of eternal fidelity to him.

But these promises and oaths will vanish without trace if one takes no pains to keep their precious memory alive in a rule in which they will be set out to serve as a monument to the solemn pact which was made between the soul and its God. Experience has demonstrated it all too well: without a rule, the fervour of the holiest of retreats is but a flaring flame that has existence for a mere moment; it blazes up and immediately vanishes.

Whereas, on the contrary, if in the spirit of resolution that possesses me to serve God all my life and in the way that I have discerned to be the most in conformity with his plans for me, I write down the conditions of this; then each time I glance over this document, and this should be several times in the course of the year, I will truly be able to say: here are the dispositions I had during that retreat when, separated from the whole world, one-to-one with God, in the allure of the flame of his grace, I penetrated the depths of my heart, visited its every recess, sounded out its every inclination: here is the fruit of the sound reflections I was able to make in those profound meditations, those serious and reflected considerations when, free of all illusion, every alien affection, every dissipation of the senses, every worldly attraction, I acknowledged where my true and only real interest lay. That was the time [p. 3] I made a sane judgment on things. Everything was weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, reason, religion, piety, these alone were the voices heard, the laws that they uttered were drawn from the bosom of the very Wisdom of God: so let them be inviolable, and let nothing in the world be able to make me neglect their least article.

After these reflections, here now is the rule that I prescribe for myself and will observe all the days of my life, with God's help, — with those

changes only that may be necessitated by changes in my situation or circumstances, — for the ordering of the various exercises.

In the first place, persuaded as I am that the life of a priest should be a life whose every day is full in the Lord's sight, I will do my very best to fulfill this strict and indispensable obligation as perfectly as is possible. Consequently, I will take pains to avoid anything that could distract me from this task. To succeed in it I will isolate myself completely from the world, and I will let this decision I have taken be clearly known so that no one will be offended when I set aside all so-called social protocol, etc.; in short, I will seek out those who are members of that society only when God's glory or the salvation of souls requires it of me, and my door will be firmly closed to everyone to whom I can be of no service *quid nobis cum alienis domibus? Illi potius ad nos veniant qui nos requirunt ... Ministerium altaris Christi, non obsequium hominibus deferendum recepimus.* (De libro Aeneo, Paris. Episc. adversus Graecos ex Sto Amrosio).

And should, eventually, I come to see that on pretext of utility or edification, someone is visiting me too frequently or for over-lengthy visits, I will reduce to an hour a day the time I devote to receiving visitors apart from the case of pressing business, etc.

[p. 4] Secondly, the obligations of a priest being a collection of duties towards God whose holiness he must depict in the eyes of men, towards neighbour for whose salvation he must continually work, and towards the Church whose minister he is, there is due an extreme vigilance to be faithful at every point of so redoubtable a charge.

That is why I must really grasp the sublimity of my ministry and of the holiness it requires of me, and that I be really convinced that it is piety alone, and the most extensive piety that can help me to reach my end. Without piety all will be sterile in me; piety on the contrary will give life to all my actions, will fertilize everything: *Pietas ... ad omnia utilis est* (I ad Timoth. c.4, v.8). Saint Ambrose rightly sees it as the basis of all the virtues, *cum pietas virtutum omnium fundamentum sit* (Serm. 18. in Ps. 118). And St. Paul too said when he wrote to Timothy: *Exerce autem te ipsum ad pietatem* (I ad Tim. c.4, v.7), persuaded that a pious minister fulfills all his other duties with exactitude.

So I will ask the Lord insistently for this grace. Then, without criticizing anyone (unless my duty requires me to correct, *increpa*, etc.) I will go straight ahead without troubling whether my conduct is an implied

condemnation of the practice of the lukewarm, and without fearing either people's sarcastic remarks and murmurings which the regularity I am going to strive to achieve might draw down upon me.

### ***Duties towards God***

My duties towards God consist principally in love, adoration, prayer, dependence on his holy will, and fidelity in keeping his commandments, etc.

I give myself no other rule with regard to these various heads except to be always ready to acknowledge that I am very far from arriving at the point I must arrive at.

I will take as model of this worship that I owe God, his adorable Son Jesus Christ our lovable Saviour, for whom I will try to have the tenderest of devotions and the most ardent love, having in my mind and even more so in my heart the memory of his generosity. And recognizing too that I am as incapable as I am unworthy of loving him, I will ask him this grace every day in the holy Sacrifice and one hundred times each day with this ejaculatory prayer: *My Jesus, give me your love*. Ah! The battle will be won if I have this devotion to J.C., one that should be par excellence that of a priest.

I will meditate on Jesus my love in his incarnation, his hidden life, his mission, his passion and death; but especially in his Sacrament and Sacrifice. My chief occupation will be to love him, my chief concern to make him loved. To this I will bend all my efforts, time, strength, and when after much toil I have succeeded in winning but a single act of love towards so good a Master, I will rightly consider myself very well paid.

I will continually recommend my soul to this good Saviour that he may preserve it from all sin, and I will so press my attentions on him during the time he sees fit to make himself accessible and so to speak dependent on me, that I may have grounds for hope that he will be favourable to me on that terrible day when he is my judge.

To try to obtain that the Lord will hear my prayers, I will join to the most exact observance of his Law the practice of mortification in such wise that it flows through all my actions, and into every circumstance of my life, reminding me that the whole life of Jesus my model was a perpetual cross and a continual martyrdom: *Tota vita Christi crux fuit et martyrium* (L.II., c.12, v.7). In the light of that how could I wish to seek out my ease and rest,



*et tu*, adds the author of the Imitation, *et tu quaeris requiem et gaudium*. Besides, as the same author also says, following all the Fathers of the spiritual life, it is well established that the more one subjugates the flesh, the more one subjects it to the spirit through penance, then too the more efficacious is grace in its effects in souls, and the more it strengthens them with interior consolations: *et quanto caro magis per afflictionem atteritur, tanto spiritus amplius per internam gratiam roboratur*.

So I will embrace that salutary penance with joy, and although it may be impossible for me to do it in proportion to the number and enormity of my crimes (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, 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, 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). Let us go back to myself: Though it be impossible for me to do penance in proportion with the number and enormity of my sins, I will act in such a way that this spirit of penance be so impressed on my soul, that I seize with joy every occasion of practicing it. It must flow into everything, both exterior and interior. Interiorily, by making me renounce my own mind, by subjecting my will and my tastes, by holding me continually in humility, by patience in contradictions and by joy in being despised. Exteriorily, by holding captive my senses and punishing my body, both by privation of the things that it likes most, and by chastisement of its rebellions, and lastly by restraint, sobriety, modesty, vigilance, paying no attention to its pretended needs unless prudence require it, in short by reducing this slave to the most absolute servitude by a hard life and by work.

And so I must take a little sleep, eat soberly, work hard and without complaint, I must moreover be of exemplary regularity in my dress and personal effects, no silk stockings, no silk cinctures, [p. 8] no wavy hair styles, a get-up that is as ridiculous as it is uncanonical; my hair on the contrary will be always well smoothed-down, and at the most I will apply from time to time a little powder for cleanliness sake, a cleanliness I will always be careful about, without being over-fussy, both in my own person and in my surroundings.

I must learn to put up with a little cold, provided it does not harm my health, and does not stop me from studying; the same goes for the heat. I must also learn to swallow things I do not like and to neatly avoid choice tidbits without anyone knowing; not to be too preoccupied about an awkward posture, a small thing to suffer, that I must not fail to offer up to God whose pleasure it is to be grateful for the intention when one would be ready to suffer more, and to be happy with little, when it is given with good grace.

And since these occasions of suffering for God in expiation of one's faults come but rarely, one must make up for them with fasts, bracelets, iron chains and the discipline; all this in a sentiment of the deepest humility, in union with the sufferings, passion and death of O.L.J.C., not looking on all these practices, which were employed by all the saints, as being any more than means for arriving at perfection, and certainly not as a proof that one has reached it.

When I have freedom of choice as to the number and quality of the dishes of my meals, I should choose the commonest and coarsest kind. A piece of boiled or roasted meat, some vegetables or eggs. Soup and two courses, unless one is enough, as I have for that matter already experienced without any harm done, [p. 9] seems to me a quite acceptable daily fare, with the addition, on some days, of some fruit, on account of the heat of my blood, taken in the same spirit as the wine spoken of by the apostle Saint Paul to his disciple Timothy: *Noli adhuc aquam bibere, sed modico vino utere, propter stomachum tuum* (I ad Tim., c.5, v.23).

Almost all my life I have drunk water, so I do not need wine, and liqueurs even less. When I am with my mother, it will be impossible to follow the regime I have just outlined, then I must at least not lose sight of it altogether; this will be a stimulus to me to be ingenious in mortifying my tastes in the very midst of abundance.

## ***Prayer***

Prayer being a principal part of the cult of adoration that is due to the sovereign Majesty of God, I must apply myself with an altogether special concern to fulfill this duty with all the conditions required to satisfy it. Woe to me if, as St. Augustine warned himself, I become more guilty through that very thing that should make me more holy! And who will justify me before God, I might say with this Doctor and Saint, if my own prayers serve to condemn me.

## ***Mass***

Mass is unquestionably the most excellent of all the prayers which can be offered to God whether on earth or in heaven itself, that is why I must have for this holy Sacrifice the tenderest of devotions, and say it always with the dispositions, and in the sentiments of a heart imbued with a sense of the greatness of the action, and of the frightful poverty of the minister deputed to do it.

[p. 10] For the time I must spend at the holy sacrifice, I will continue to do as I have done since I had the happiness to become a priest, namely, I will never be less than half-an-hour, and I will try not to take longer, unless I am alone with my server and can without causing inconvenience yield a little more to my devotion.

And on this subject I will let them backbite who will without bothering myself about what these critics may say or think, be they even priests of the Lord or doctors in Israel.

I will always observe the rubrics with scrupulous exactitude, remembering that there is not a single one in the holy Sacrifice, however trivial it may seem, which is not *of precept* and does not oblige therefore on pain of sin; and I will act in such a way as to be able to maintain that there is not in the catholic universe a single priest who says the mass more in conformity with the rules than myself.

I will never forget during the Sacrifice, when O.L. is on the altar, to ask with inward groaning for great sorrow for my past sins, the grace of committing no more in the future, a love of God and his Son, my adorable Saviour, capable of withstanding anything and above everything, and lastly to be a priest according to his heart, for everything is contained in that one

word. I will add, as I have done daily so far, with all the fervour I can muster, the request for the grace, so little deserved, of final perseverance, and as the punishment due to my sins is so great and frightening, I will persevere in the most insistent request to satisfy by martyrdom [p. 11] or at least by death in service to my neighbour, the enormous debt I have contracted towards the divine Justice.<sup>16</sup>

Until such time as someone proves that there exists in this world an action that gives more glory to God, is more advantageous to souls, to the sanctification of the priest, the comforting of our brothers who are suffering in purgatory, I will say mass every day, and twice a day if it can be done, and would to God that all my life might be spent at this sublime ministry. I would convert more souls by my assiduous service at the altar than by all the sermons I could give. Happy was the great pontiff St. Leo who offered the holy Sacrifice up to seven times a day, without the business of the Church which was in his care being any the worse for that.

Given that it is impossible for me to satisfy this my heart's desire because of the current discipline of the Church, I will limit myself to saying the holy mass every day, but I will make up with the most lively and ardent desires of my soul for this impotence that the rigorous law of the Church imposes on me, by uniting myself fervently with all the masses that are said throughout Christendom.

It is in this perspective that I will never let slip the opportunity of being able to binate, cost what it may by way of suffering and inconvenience.

But as it is not enough to say mass, one must also say it well, I will do my utmost to bring to it, with God's grace, the most perfect dispositions. For this reason my way of life will be of a kind so in conformity with the Law and even the evangelical Counsels, that all the actions of my day may be so many preparatory acts, or thanksgivings; always making my meditation precede by way of proximate preparation and a half-hour's private thanksgiving follow on it.

This thanksgiving must not be done in the sacristy, but at the foot of the altar, and if possible I should be dressed in surplice.

<sup>16</sup> The following six paragraphs have been added in the margin of pages 9-11. These same reflections had been made and then crossed out in the "Rule for life in Aix," drawn up in August-September.

I will take care, after laying aside the priestly vestments with the same recollection and interior spirit I had in putting them on, to leave the sacristy without saying a word to anybody, be they who they may. And if someone does not understand, from my bearing, that I do not want to be disturbed, and is so indiscreet as to speak to me, I will answer in laconic fashion and thus avoid with a kind of scruple entering into a conversation which would be wholly out of place and even a source of scandal.

Why should it be a problem to me to say politely that I would be more ready and free to chat after my thanksgiving?

## ***Divine Office***

After the Sacrifice of the altar the divine office is one of the most important functions of my ministry. In making me responsible for this office, the Church wishes that several times a day her minister be present before the throne of his God's mercies to draw down heavenly blessings on her children, and turn away from above their heads the scourges that the multitude of sins committed on earth call out for all too strongly. She wishes that I perform in her name, and in the name of the Christian people, that I take part here below in what employs the blessed spirits in heaven: *Divinum officium, imitatio coelestis concentus* (S. Bonav. De Sexalis Seraph. c.8), that I begin during this life that concert of praises that I shall not cease to repeat in the other, if, as I must hope, I have the happiness to get there.

So I will direct all my attention to acquit myself worthily of this holy and consoling ministry, both as to the manner and as to the order in which I say it. As to the manner, I will direct all my attention to see that it is not an empty din of muddled words said out of obligation; I know well enough what reproaches the Jews merited for not having acquitted this duty of religion in any other way than this. This people honours me with their lips, says the Lord, and their heart is far from me. How many priests deserve this reproach, and as for myself too, do I not have some improvements to make on this score?

The indispensable conditions required for praying as one ought are found in this preparatory prayer that a laudable custom normally prefixes to the recitation of every part of the divine office: *Aperi Domine os meum ... ut digne, attente, ac devote recitare valeam hoc officium*, etc., namely, respectfully, attentively, devoutly.

*Respectfully*, i.e., without haste, in a modest posture, in a suitable place.

*Attentively*, for without attention there is no true prayer, prayer being a rational worship. To pray without attention is to act purely mechanically.

*Devoutly*, for prayer is homage of the heart even more than it is of the mind, and the words of O.L. cited above prove that it is in the heart that lies the merit of prayer.

In the recitation of the office, therefore, it will be very much to the point, indeed indispensable, always to prepare myself, even if only by fervently raising my heart to God.

I will take pains to repulse every distraction that comes up as soon as I notice it, and to avoid them persisting in spite of myself I will make an imperceptible pause at the end of each psalm while saying *Gloria Patri*, to renew my intention and refocus my attention if it has wandered for a moment. I will fix my mind to the best of my ability on the meaning of the Psalms that I am saying, in such a way as to follow the Psalmist in the various feelings that move him and that my heart may produce the same effect that animated him when he composed those wonderful canticles, *Si orat Psalmus orate: Si gemit gemite, si gratulatur gaudete, si timet timete* (s. Aug. in Ps. 30), but when I do notice some involuntary distraction, I will try to accept not to go over it again as has sometimes happened, [p. 13] being satisfied in that case with humbling myself before the Lord, asking pardon of him from the bottom of my heart, and starting again then with a new fervour to make reparation for past negligence.

So much for the manner in which I will acquit myself in a holy way of that important and consoling function. I will not add anything else save a desire that I might make this prayer on my knees, with uncovered head, as we read that the Venerable Cardinal Bellarmine and several other holy personages never failed to do.

As to the order, I will enter as much as I can into the spirit of the Church and its ancient practice by dividing up my saying of the office, and reciting it at the different times set out for it; if the Venerable Bellarmine, overburdened as he was with so many responsibilities, managed to conform with this edifying practice, it seems to me it should not be impossible for me, especially as I have always wanted to do it and have even made the attempt without difficulty while I was at the seminary.

## ***Presence of God. Ejaculatory prayers.***

But however holy, however excellent this prayer may be, it is not sufficient to fulfill the Saviour's precept which calls for our prayer to be continual, *oportet semper orare et nunquam deficere* [Luke 18:1]. Anyone would therefore be deluding himself if he thought he had wholly satisfied his obligations by saying his breviary reasonably well, even if he had celebrated the divine Mysteries as well: *oportet semper orare et nunquam deficere* [p. 14]. This continual prayer is not at all impossible as some might think, it would even be impious to say so since O. Lord who laid it down could not command something that was impractical.

A simple and easy way of fulfilling this precept is the practice of the presence of God and ejaculatory prayers, adding to that the important, vital meditation which is like the arsenal that supplies the provisions for the day, *in meditatione exardescet ignis* [Ps. 38:4]. By means of this holy practice, the faithful soul is ceaselessly in the company of his beloved, and if for a few moments it is obliged to be absent, it finds a way to show him, even from afar, that its greatest good would be never to leave him, it makes use for this purpose of ejaculatory prayers which are like so many arrows of love which one lets fly towards God to draw his grace into our hearts.

And so during the day whether I am studying or eating or walking or alone or in the company of other persons, I will take great pains to keep myself in the presence of God, watching over myself so as never to do a thing that might sadden my good Father, and to bear witness to my love for him, I will sigh often towards him by means of short but lively aspirations, secret yearnings, loving glances towards the images which trace for us what he has done for us, his all-too-ungrateful creatures.

I would wish to have near me a faithful friend [p. 15] who would remind me of my beloved in times when occupations cause me to lose sight of him. In the absence of such a friend, I will use other means, such as, for example, raising my heart to God whenever the clock sounds, whenever someone knocks on my door, whenever a carriage passes, etc. Since I am already familiar with this practice, I have only to continue it.

Another means for habituating oneself to place oneself very often in the presence of the Saviour, is that used by the good and respected Mr. Emery; he used to have a small box filled with little peas, and each time he

thought of God, he passed one of these peas into another box: he used then every evening to make a count of the number of times he had been united with God during the day, he compared that with that of the previous evening, and if he had not had the thought at least every quarter of an hour, he imposed a penance on himself. That is what that venerable old man used to do in the midst of his countless occupations.

## *Oraison*

I will say nothing about oraison as there is too much to say, I am sufficiently familiar with its importance, I have a sufficient knowledge of what the Saints thought about it, and that maxim consecrated by experience, that there are no really good priests without oraison, has been too deeply drummed into me for me ever to be able to forget it, and for me ever to be tempted to give up this holy exercise. Oraison must be the daily bread of the priest, that is where he will find strength, light, consolation in all the afflictions with which his life will be marked; that is where God [p. 16] communicating himself to him through the intimate union of his inspirations and his grace, will give him in abundance everything he needs to fulfill his ministry worthily, and make it useful and profitable to his soul and those of his brothers, in a word it is there, and only there, that he will be able to learn the science of the Saints, and the ways they followed so as to imitate them and attain the same results as they.

## *Spiritual Reading*

But to furnish material for this exercise, there is yet another very important one which I will make it an obligation never to miss, namely spiritual reading. I see spiritual reading as the store where one furnishes oneself in abundance with the prime matter which must then be worked on, elaborated in oraison which extracts from it as it were the most exquisite sugar; this is not a far-fetched idea, it conveys exactly what I think, for I am convinced that unless one be led by extraordinary ways one will make but little progress in oraison if one is ignorant of what the Saints have written about the spiritual life; besides, the examples of their virtues, that one reads in their lives, are singularly suited to bring us to imitate them, and it is really only in ascetical books that we can acquire the taste for piety, and if the reading of these kinds of books is not familiar to us, how will we lead the souls who are confided to us. One will follow one's own private bent and do all manner of foolishness [p. 17].



## *Visit to the Blessed Sacrament*

A priest who knows that O.L.J.C., not content with mystically immolating himself every day on our altars for love of us, wished to push the excess of his tenderness for his children to the point of dwelling habitually among them, needs no other motive to be eager to go to render him all the duties that gratitude demands of him. What journeys would one not undertake, what labours would one not endure, what obstacles of every kind would one not be determined to overcome to reach the place, were it at the extremities of the earth, where one would have the certitude that our lovable Saviour had come down.

And yet, because in his excessive, incomprehensible goodness, he wanted to spare us all these pains in choosing his dwelling among us, in establishing in our midst the throne of his mercies, where he awaits us to fill us with his gifts and most abundant graces, Christians forgetting all that they owe to so good a Father for so much love, by an inconceivable madness, deprive themselves voluntarily of the indispensable helps that they would infallibly find at the feet of the sacred tabernacles where their tender and generous friend resides. What a terrible reckoning these ungrateful persons will one day face for this indifference as insulting to O.L.J.C. as it is disastrous for them!

For myself, to whom the Lord has always given the grace of being touched and penetrated with the love he shows us in his Sacrament, [p. 18] I who have experienced so often the effects of his promises when in times of trial or affliction I have had recourse to his Mercy, I will not imitate the insouciance of those priests who after they have said mass, if they say it at all, do not appear again in the temple of the Living God who resides there, and who awaits them there, unless it be to pass through on the run when some business calls them there, contenting themselves then to spend a minute kneeling before the Supreme Majesty of God whom they seem to ignore, while their icy heart is perhaps far, far away. I will be happier to take as my model the holy priest Nepotianus to whom St. Jerome gives this testimony *ubicumque eum quaereres, in Ecclesia invenires*; at least I will not let a single day go by without going to the foot of the holy altar to pour out my heart in the bosom of the one who loves me, sincerely regretting that the time has passed when, living under the same roof as he, I was able without disturbing in any way the performance of the other duties he had imposed on me, to go and spend some moments in his company many times in the course of the day; a happy time when I had the consolation of seeing from my bed as well as from the room where I studied, the light that shone in his holy presence, and whose lot more than once was my envy.

## *Examination of Conscience*

To consolidate the work of my sanctification, it will be necessary: 1. to examine twice a day the way I have conducted myself during the day, confronting it with what God's law, the Church's precepts, the duties proper to my state, and this rule prescribe for me [p. 19] and if through human weakness, or negligence, I have been unfaithful to any of these points however unimportant it may seem, I will humble myself before God, and take steps to do better on the following day; if on the contrary I see that by God's grace all has gone well, I will bless the Lord to whom alone belongs the glory, and I will encourage myself to continue on the same path, and with still more fervour, having always God and God alone in view in all my actions, renouncing all the glory that might redound to me, recalling that saying of the Saints, that men often praise you for an action in which God the severe scrutineer of hearts finds only matter for condemnation.<sup>17</sup>

One of these examinations must be specially employed in the pursuit of the predominant fault which is to be given no quarter until it has been entirely destroyed. I will then pass in search of another with the same determination and then another, until no more remain. There will be enough there to take up my whole life.

Here is the method I will follow in my examination, it is I think that of Father Surin:

Before the examination: 1. Thank God for his gifts. It is also necessary to thank God for all the evils of body and soul from which he has delivered me, not only those of which I am aware, but also those that I am unaware of.

2. Ask him for the grace to know and detest sin.

Examination: 3. Carefully examine one's conscience by running through in one's mind every hour of the day, and considering attentively what I did, said or neglected to do in each one.

After the examination: 4. Ask God for forgiveness of one's sins.

5. Form a purpose of amendment with God's grace. It would be good too in this exercise to offer God the little bit of good I may have done in

<sup>17</sup> The following paragraph is written in the margin of pages 18 and 19.

the day, as well as the share that belongs to me as member of the Church of all the good which is done within her bosom. To finish up, I will impose some penance on myself.

This exercise should last a quarter of an hour.

As to acts one must consider:

1. What perfection is required for each act to make it pleasing to God and like that of J.C.
2. What defects does one discover.
3. What remedies must one impose.

It is clear that if one is exact in doing in this way one's examination every evening, one cannot but end up with extirpating the greater part of one's vices. One derives too another very great advantage from this method: namely, one acquires in this way a very great facility for doing well the examinations that precede confessions. One also fulfills [p. 20] by this salutary practice this important counsel of the Saviour that few people like to think about: *Vigilate quia nescitis qua hora Dominus Vester venturus sit ... Ideo et vos estote parati quia qua nescitis hora filius hominis venturus est* (Matt. 24:42-44).

By this examination one settles so to speak one's accounts every day with the Father of the family, and one is ready at any time to present them to the Sovereign Master of life who can at any moment, and at the moment one least expects, summon us to go into their every detail before his fearful tribunal.

It is in this examination that one exercises over oneself that judgment which, according to the word of the Apostle, should exempt us from another infinitely more fearful and severe judgment. *Si nosmetipsos di-judicavimus, non utique judicavimus* (I Cor. 11:31).

For by the contrition it arouses in us, by the penances one imposes on oneself, by the stern resolutions one forms to sin no more, one obtains pardon for one's faults, one arrives at diminishing their number, and one pays in advance, through voluntary satisfactions, the incomparably more rigorous chastisements which were reserved for them in purgatory. The Lord, as one knows, does not punish twice the same fault.

However small the attention with which one looks at all the advantages that ought to result from the examination of conscience done as it ought to be done, one will not be surprised at the expressions used by the

author of an excellent book that every priest [p. 21] should mediate on, with which I conclude this article.

“No words can express, says this author, the usefulness of this holy practice. It is such that one would have to have lost one’s judgment, desire for salvation, and the fear of eternal damnation not to embrace it with all one’s heart” (Instr. des Prêtres de D.A. Molina, Chartreux).

## **Confession**

Confession is not only useful to those who have had the misfortune of mortally offending God. It is for these unfortunate people an absolute necessity, but this sacrament is so advantageous even for a priest who by God’s grace abstains perseveringly from every grave fault, it is so important for him to make frequent use of it that I would dare almost to hazard that it is indispensable for him to approach it often if he wishes to persevere in the virtue and purity of conscience requisite for ascending every day to the holy Altar.

Without going into details on this subject that this rule is not concerned with, I will limit myself to reminding myself of the example of the Saints, such as St. Philip Neri, St. Charles Borromeo and so many others who practiced daily confession, and the synodal ordinances of so many different dioceses that oblige priests on pain of suspension to go to confession at least once a week, and the rules of various institutes [p. 22] which prescribe confession three times, twice or at least once a week, finally the practice of every good priest I have known throughout my life. Even apart from all these respected authorities, a properly understood piety, simple good sense even would say enough on this heading for me unhesitatingly to decide to continue always what I have practiced up to the present day with as much advantage for myself as consolation. So I will go to confession at least every week.

I believe it is Father Surin or Father Rigoleu who gives the following rules for people who aspire to reach a high state of perfection.

The general examination and the accusation of faults in the confessional tribunal ought to have for object:

1. *Deliberate* faults against the commandments of God and the Church, the duties of one’s state, vows, rules and constitutions.

2. Faults of pure weakness, committed through fragility or by surprise and committed so to speak with *semi-deliberation*.

3. The first movements that lead to some considerable emotion, especially when they derive from an interior principle, namely, from vice or passion, for example, from self-love, anger, jealousy, even if no consent is given.

4. The sacraments that one does not receive with exactitude, fervour, preparation and thanksgiving.

5. Personal resolutions that one has neglected.

6. The inspirations of grace that one has not responded to faithfully enough.

N.B. The examination ought not to be minute, and the accusation should enjoy genuine clarity and precision.

## 110. Resolutions.<sup>18</sup>

*How to perform pious exercises. Comportment in the apostolate. Avoid sin, imitate Jesus Christ.*

1812-1813<sup>19</sup>

A moment's recollection before beginning the office, say it in a reflective way, savour it. Examen after saying it. Say it kneeling down whenever possible. Recite the breviary come what may.

St. Philip Neri, from the time he was ordained, every day at mass when the rubrics permitted used to say the prayer: *Deus cui omne cor patet*, etc.

Hospital and prison visitation, the workhouse. Access easy. Fixed day for confession. Much charity, gentleness, compassion in this work. Preaching.

Director, duties as to him. Annual retreat and each month. Think often of death, at every hour after saying the *Cor Jesu*. Perform all these actions as if they might be the last ones in your life. Fix a day each month to think specially on this. Say the viaticum mass.

<sup>18</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-2.

<sup>19</sup> An undated page. On the back one reads: "Entered the seminary at 8 in the evening. At 9: dinner, bottle of ink, firewood." From the text (he was unpacking his valises) and context, these notes were written, it seems, at the outset of his ministry in Aix, in 1812-1813.

Discipline. Dry bread for lunch. Fasts. Prayers as they should be said. Rosary. Particular examen, general examen. Oraison. Holy Scripture.

Retreat every month in which I will pass in review all my various duties: mass, office, oraison, etc. Read Tronson on the mass, office, confession, etc.

Rectify, purify, supernaturalise as much as possible the choice of state.

Avoid not only every mortal sin, and even every deliberate venial sin, but also do all I can to diminish the number of faults committed unintentionally.

Before performing an action, foresee the dangers that my weakness may encounter in it, and take some precautionary resolution to guide me in it with purity of heart, rightness of intention, discretion, reserve, gentleness, patience, etc.

Occasionally let fall from my lips that word that is so difficult for me to utter: I am wrong, I have made a mistake.

Take J.C. as model in his interior and exterior, in his hidden life and in his public life. Ask what is his mind, the way he would have judged, etc., so as to conform our own with his and judge like him. Never entertain vain and useless thoughts, that is not loving God *ex tota mente*, with all one's mind, not permitting one's mind to fill itself with what has nothing to do with God, so as to conform ourselves with the sentiments of his heart, loving only what he would have loved, etc., i.e., the glory of his Father, etc.

## 111. Concerning mortification.<sup>20</sup>

*Necessity of mortification; how to mortify oneself.*

[1812-1814]<sup>21</sup>

There are two kinds of mortification, one affects the body, the other the spirit; they are both the one and the other very necessary to the priest

<sup>20</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM V-2.

<sup>21</sup> An undated text; we suggest 1812-1814 because it focuses on the priest and, in his December 1814 retreat, at the beginning of the mediation on the 6th day, Eugene begins with an expression very similar to that found here: "True mortification includes two things: bodily suffering and restraint of the spirit."

of Jesus Christ. *Omnis enim qui in agone contendit ab omnibus se abstinet* (I Cor. 9:25). And who is most committed to combat in this life's arena if not the priest who is obliged to it not only in virtue of a duty common to all Christians, but because of his special office and the obligation entailed by his ministry. He must do battle not only for himself, but for others and even for the Church *adversus principes, et potestates, adversus mundi rectores tenebrarum harum, contra spiritualia nequitiae in caelestibus* (Eph. 6:12). This is why the same Apostle who sets out this teaching for us adds ... *castigo corpus meum et in servitutum redigo, ne forte cum aliis praedicaverim, ipse reprobus efficiar* (I. Cor. 9:27).

One must, if one wishes to live the life of J.C., following the advice of the Apostle, carry always about oneself the mortification of J.C. and do this not only to dominate the depraved inclinations of corrupt nature by mortifying its members, but also *ut adimpleat in corpore suo quae desunt passioni Christi* (Col. 1:24).

He can include in the category of his mortifications, not only all that he does to avoid sin, but also all he undertakes in the practice of some virtue, both when he has to fulfill some duty of his ministry, or do some action agreeable to God to the detriment of his leisure, comfort, liking.

That is what Our Lord calls renouncing oneself, which he requires of those who wish to follow him.

Although what one abstains from or does for God are often small things in themselves, the virtue that specifies them is always considerable in God's eyes.

One must also, following the example of the saints, impose some bodily mortifications voluntarily on oneself, for *Regnum coelorum vim patitur et violenti rapiunt illud* (Matt. 11:12) and also to render oneself more in conformity with J.C. *vir dolorum ac sciens infirmitatem* (Is. 53:3).

Aix: Hotel Joannis, no. 2,  
Papassaudy Street.  
The house of Eugene's mother  
where he himself resided  
from 1802 to 1808 and from 1812  
to 1815.



The church of St. Mary  
Magdalene, where Father  
de Mazenod preached a  
Lenten series in 1813.



## 1813 - 1815

### 112. Priests serving Mass.<sup>1</sup>

*Eugene's motives for occasionally serving mass, to the surprise of certain priests. Example set by some saints.*

[1813 . . . ]<sup>2</sup>

The surprise (coupled with secret disapproval), that certain priests have made known to me over the fact that out of what is no more than a simple feeling of devotion that could not be more natural I have from time to time served mass, has induced me to gather examples that the Saints have given us on this matter.

I am sure that there is not a single one among them who did not consider himself blessed to fulfill this honourable ministry that the least glimmer of faith shows us to be so far above what we deserve; the more one appreciates the greatness of the mystery the more too one counts oneself blessed to cooperate in its celebration, and given the impossibility of acting always in this great work in the role of principal minister, there is nothing more in conformity with faith, piety and devotion to this admirable sacrifice than to desire to share in it even as a subordinate minister. A priest who is made responsible for proclaiming the word of God in Christian pulpits, for developing the meaning of the divine Scriptures both for the simple faithful, and for the great and learned of this earth, does not demean himself by teaching catechism to children, although the Church has especially entrusted this duty to various lower ministers such as deacons; in this light how can one be afraid that he may compromise his dignity by serving mass, that is, by exercising the functions of an order that he did receive and whose character has not been effaced by the priesthood, in performing an

<sup>1</sup> Orig.: Arch de la Post. DM IV-6. There is extant (ibid.) another page, certainly written before this one, entitled: "Examples of priests serving mass." It lists only the names of St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, and St. Philip Neri, followed by an "argument that I am building up on this question" more or less the same as, but shorter than, that published here.

<sup>2</sup> An undated text, but written after Eugene's return to Aix at the end of 1812.

act of religion by which the very Angels would deem themselves infinitely honoured, and which is in effect the most honourable after that exercised by the priest in the sacrificial action, since by serving mass one cooperates in a way that is very proximate to that very sacrifice, that one is by way of being the representative of all the faithful who offer the holy Victim through the hands of the priest, that one is answering the sublime prayers that the priest addresses to the Most High, that one provides the matter for the sacrifice, that one facilitates in some way its execution, etc.

The Saints thoroughly understood all these things, and had a better appreciation of them than do the Pharisees of today. So let us observe St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure, making it a kind of duty to serve mass every day and sometimes more than once. Even so these great doctors held a rather sound view of the priesthood. St. Philip Neri was so far from believing that this great role was beneath his dignity that he made it a rule for his Congregation and invited every priest to serve mass after saying his own.

St. Lawrence of Brindisi, who was not only one of the greatest saints but one of the most learned and able men of his age, would spend the whole morning, during an entire Lent that he passed at Loreto, in serving the masses that were said after his own which he used to celebrate very early in the morning; and one can be sure that this fervour was not born overnight, and what he did on that occasion more frequently and as noted by the historian of his life, following the testimony of the penitentiary of Loreto, is proof that he was already accustomed to do it previously.

Saint Bruno ordered all his religious to serve each others' masses, and we are edified to see this practice observed still in this fervent Order.

I return to the words of St. Philip Neri in his Constitutions: "... *In divinae Sacrificio Missae, non solum singuli quotidie clerici laicique deserviunt, sed sacerdotes complures laude quidem digni sunt administrari* ..." Thence the custom established in the Congregation of the Oratory in every Catholic country (outside France), that each priest serve a mass in thanksgiving for the one he has just said.

### 113. To Mr. de Forbin-Janson, c/o His Lordship the Bishop of Chambéry, in Chambéry.<sup>3</sup>

*Father de Mazenod, while he expresses his joy over Charles' apostolic works, strongly urges him to moderate his zeal and put limits on the scope of his activity.*

L.J.C.

Aix. February 19, 1813.

I always receive your letters with a new sense of pleasure, most dear friend. The only thing that upsets me is that you always wait until the last minute to write them, as this cuts short the time we spend together. I bless the Lord for the good he works through your ministry and, apart from the joy that every Christian must feel at the news of the growth in the work of God, I experience, in a personal way, a special consolation for the success of the various outlets of your zeal. I thank the good God for it, as if it were I he had made use of for his glory and the salvation of our brothers; and what you do, I rejoice over as if we had done it together. But, dear friend, will you please listen to me for once in your life? You have to put limits on that zeal of yours, if you want it to be both more productive and more enduring. Keep in mind that it is I who is saying this to you. It is not your brother according to the flesh, nor your mother, nor a worn-out priest, etc., people who have never known, or have lost touch with, what the real interests of the Father of the family demand of each of us and especially of some in particular of his servants. You know me and you know that, although I certainly love you as my very self, I would rejoice at your death. Weigh these words, yes! I would rejoice at your death, if the example of your devotedness might avail more to the glory of God and be more useful to the Church than the prolongation of the exercise of your ministry. I can

<sup>3</sup> Orig.: Paris, arch. de la Sainte-Enfance. The rule of life Eugene made in 1812 might lead one to think that he intended to live more like a monk than an apostle dedicated to an active apostolate. The few letters that we still have, written in the period 1813-1815, allow us to see however that he gave himself with zeal to a number of ministries; for this reason we publish some extracts from these letters as well as the retreat notes.

From the advice Eugene gives here to Forbin-Janson, one can conclude that he himself shows prudence in the way he plunges into active apostolate, but that he is ready to lay down his life for it when circumstances so warrant: "There will perhaps come a time when I will indeed say to you: 'Come, let us die now, we are no longer good for anything else. Let us press on to the death!'"

We still have a letter written on January 23, 1813, containing practically the same advice, addressed to Father Joseph de Courti, in Lyons, another co-disciple of Eugene in Paris.

only tell you more or less what I would say for myself, and these are my feelings about my own position. How is it then in that case that what I tell you makes no more impression on you than what others are telling you? Do you wish to be a judge in your own cause? How can you, in good faith, be satisfied with a decision extorted from people who have scarcely known you for a week and are quite happy with a superficial appearance of well-being; I would almost say with a certain show, without any consideration of the consequences that could be irreparable. I implore you, do not brush aside what I am about to say in an effort to put limits on your holy excesses; your health and your very life weigh as secondary factors only in the advice I give, and should not enter into the calculation except in so much as they can contribute to a very great good. So when now I tell you that when you go to stay at a seminary where, naturally, you must want to give good example, even so you must not do it in such a way as to exhaust yourself as you did in Paris before my very eyes; that you must give sufficient time to sleep and not deprive your stomach, which needs more nourishment than most people's, of what is needed to keep going a body as active as yours; that oil is needed to lubricate these wheels that turn continually with a frightening rapidity; that you must not stay on your knees for hours on end; that you must not speak without ever pausing; and a thousand other things that I would still have to say. Well, when I speak to you like that, you must not take a jump backwards and thrust my advice a thousand leagues, but on the contrary you ought fully to accept it and act in conformity with it. There will perhaps come a time when I will indeed say to you: "Come, let us die now, we are no longer good for anything else. Let us press on to the death!"

In the meantime, I think that you will be doing a good deed if you recount to me everything that you will do, even the scorn for my remonstrances which issue not in the name of worldly friendship but in the name of the charity that unites us, and the good and the greater good of the family of the common Father.

Good-bye. Let me have a double dose of your prayers. Affectionate greetings and love in Our Lord.

P.S. I do not know if you remember that I have several times offered the holy Sacrifice for you, over and above the daily share you have in all the good that I do. You understand what that means.

## 114. Homily instructions in Provençal, given at the church of the Magdalene in 1813. [Notes for the preliminary instruction, March 3, Ash Wednesday].<sup>4</sup>

*The poor like the rich must be in possession of the truth. Dignity of the human person and of the poor.*

March 3, 1813

In the course of this holy season there will be an abundance of instructions for the rich, people with an education, etc., but won't there be any for the poor and unlettered? The Pastor's love has seen to it that there will be; what a shame not to profit from the occasion.

Get them to admit that they do not understand very much of studied discourses, especially when they are addressed in French.

However the Gospel must be taught to all and it must be taught in such a way as to be understood.

The poor, a precious portion of the Christian family, cannot be abandoned to their ignorance.

Our divine Saviour attached such importance to this that he took on himself the responsibility of instructing them and he cited as proof of the divinity of his mission the fact that the poor were being evangelized, *pau-peres evangelizantur*.

In effect, the knowledge of the truth that he came to bring to men being necessary to obtain eternal life, to save oneself, it was necessary that it be put within the reach of all, a big difference from the ancient philosophers who taught only a small number of pupils, and repulsed the multitude, and

<sup>4</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM V-3. We have in our possession the reasonably complete text of the sermons for the five Sundays of Lent: Lent and fasting, truths necessary for salvation, sin, confession. The preliminary instruction on the contrary consists of simple notes. We publish it because of the importance of a few paragraphs on the dignity of the poor and Father de Mazenod's interest in them. On the basis of these ideas, he proceeded to improvise a text in Provençal. We have however a translation of the key passages of this sermon, a recent translation, given to Father Deschatelets on the occasion of the centenary celebrations of the death of the Founder in Aix in May 1961: "T'aura dins aqueste tems de Caremo, fouesso predicança per lei riche, per aquelei qu'an pouscu ana eis escolo ... Sias Leis enfant de Dieu, lei fraire Jesus-Crist, leis eiritie tamben de soun reiaume eterne ..." etc.

which thus carried within itself the mark of error as the truth must be known to all, all having an equal right to its possession.

[p. 2]. We place ourselves therefore at the disposition of the simplest among the ignorant. Like the father of a family, etc., we will gather together our children to uncover for them a treasure, etc., but courage, constancy will be needed to acquire it, etc., the empty discourses of men must be scorned, for people will be found who are as stupid as those of Noah's time. They laughed at his simplicity when they saw him making the ark which was to save him from the ruin, him and all his family ... what happened? ...

Those of our own day will laugh perhaps at the pains you are taking to assure your salvation, to save your soul from the ruin that will engulf so many others, but when the day of vengeance arrives, there will be no more time, etc., they will perish, etc.

After all, what is at issue here? Nothing less than salvation or the eternal loss of your souls, that is to say, the one and only thing that merits your attentions. The very thing you have given no serious thought to perhaps until this moment. It is a matter of learning what the Lord asks of you so as to procure for you an eternal happiness, what you must avoid so as not to merit a calamity that will never end.

It was God's wish that you would bring to the search for this vital knowledge the urgency that you know how to employ for every other affair, for your paltry temporal affairs, but that is far, etc. What zeal, ardour to win some temporal advantage! What negligence, etc., for all that relates to salvation.

Question the milling crowd that jostles in the public squares, [p. 3] ask anyone what he is doing, where he is going, what is he engaged in doing, etc. The one will answer that a process on the issue of which depends his entire fortune summons him to the bench to solicit, etc. Another will say that he is going to negotiate an important matter, etc. Another will say that he is going to negotiate his presence on the farm whither he is hying with all speed. Another again will say that he is going over in his mind some plans concerning fortune, interests or ambition that will assure, etc. Perhaps you will discover some who will be compelled to say that they are hastening their steps towards the object of their infamous passions. Not a single one, no, not one will be able to reply that his mind is filled with the eternal verities, that these are the subject of his meditations and researches. *Desolatione desolata est terra*, etc. (Jer. 12:11). O blindness! O folly! However, the days pass, the years roll by, death has its day!

Then illusion vanishes, but there is no longer time to make good the loss of a life entirely devoted in the arduous search for passing vanities that must be left behind. It is too late to amass an incorruptible treasure of glory and happiness for eternity.

So come, whoever you are, come assiduously to some instructions that must undeceive you on the score of many a fatal error, enlighten you on what are your only true interests. Come especially you poor of Jesus Christ and may God grant that I may make my voice heard in the four quarters of the world to reawaken so many foolish people from the fatal torpor that brings them to their doom. We will begin with teaching you what you are, your noble origin, what rights it gives you, and what obligations too it imposes on you, etc.

Man is God's creature, etc.

[p. 5]. Come now and learn from us what you are in the eyes of faith.

Poor of Jesus Christ, afflicted, wretched, suffering, sick, covered with sores, etc., all you whom misery oppresses, my brothers, dear brothers, respected brothers, listen to me.

You are God's children, the brothers of Jesus Christ, heirs to his eternal kingdom, chosen portion of his inheritance; you are, in the words of St. Peter, a holy nation, you are kings, you are priests, you are in some way Gods, *Dii estis et filii excelsi omnes*.

So lift up your spirits, that your defeated souls may breathe, grovel no longer on the ground: *Dii estis et filii excelsi omnes*. (Ps. 81:6).

Lift yourselves towards heaven where your minds should be set, *conversatio vestra in caelo* (Phil. 3:20), let your eyes see for once beneath the rags that cover you, there is within you an immortal soul made in the image of God whom it is destined to possess one day, a soul ransomed at the price of the blood of Jesus Christ, more precious in the eyes of God than all earth's riches, than all the kingdoms of the earth, a soul of which he is more jealous than of the government of the entire universe.

Christians, know then your dignity, with St. Leo I will call you sharers in the divine nature, etc.

[p. 6]. Your Creator did not place you on the earth to amass riches since as St. Bernard says this sort of wealth weighs heavy on those who possess it, wounds those who love it, torments those who lose it: *possessa onerant, amata vulnerant, ammissa cruciant*.

Nor for honours, glory or reputation, as they bring with them a lot of troubles and anxieties which are accorded especially to those who least merit them.

Nor for the pleasure of the senses which give rise to so much bitterness and are made more for the beasts than for rational human beings.

Nor even for knowledge since we see that the devils, despite the superiority of their knowledge, are nonetheless wretchedly damned.

God alone was worthy of your soul. God alone could satisfy your heart. And you, in constant flight from your only good, prostituted this heart, which he gave you for loving him, to avarice, love of pleasures; you ran in pursuit of passing creatures which all in their own way diverted you from your end by promising you the happiness that it is useless to search for outside God. The experience of your cruel errors in this matter taught you nothing and you did not become any the more percipient.

And so it is that after living 20, 30, 40 years and more without seeking God, without having God as the goal of your thoughts, action, you have wasted your whole life, merited nothing and, if you had to appear today before his fearful judgement seat, you would not have one good work to offer him in compensation for your innumerable infidelities.

[p. 7]. Let us put our questions to the world. It will reply in line with the prejudices, the foolish code that serves as its rule of life, on which, etc., according to which it pronounces, etc. Workers, who are you in the eyes of the world? A class of people destined to spend their lives in the painful exercise of an obscure toil that places you in dependence on and submits you to the caprices of all those from whom you must wheedle a job.

Servants, who are you in the eyes of the world? A class of people slaves of those who pay your wages, exposed to contempt, injustice and often even ill-treatment at the hands of demanding and sometimes cruel employers who think they have bought the right to treat you with injustice with the paltry wage they pay you.

And you, tillers of the soil, peasants, who are you in the eyes of the world? However valuable your labours, you are valued only for the strength of your arms and if your sweat, distasteful as it is to them, gets any attention at all, it is only because it falls on and enriches the ground.

And what about you poor beggars, obliged by man's injustice or the harshness of fate to go cap in hand for your pitiful sustenance, to beg



brazenly the bread you need for staying alive. The world sees you as the refuse of society, to be kept out of its sight and avoided so as not to be pained by your plight that they have no wish to relieve.

That is what the world thinks. That is what you are in its eyes! But all the same that is the master you have chosen, the one you have so far grovelled to. What reward can you expect? Insult and contempt, that is the reward it sets aside for you; you will never have any other from that source.

[p. 8]. Seeing this, etc., I asked myself if men knew who they are, etc., and came to the conclusion that there were really very few who were not in this matter in the most deplorable state of ignorance. ... On the one hand, there are those who, dazzled by the show of their brilliant fortune, accustomed to the homages of flattery, etc., are looked upon as the earth's idols to whom there was owed, etc. I pitied them for their pride, and leaving death the charge of teaching them how fragile is the throne their foolish vanity has raised up, I turned away, etc. Fixing then my gaze on another class of mortals who look for all their well-being to their hard work, I saw them use all their best efforts, etc. All their faculties, absorbed so to speak in this sole pursuit, they live as if they had no other wealth to obtain than what they search for with great difficulty in the depths of the earth which will one day swallow them up.

### **115. Colloquial instruction on confession, preached in Provençal, on the fourth Sunday of Lent, [March 28] in the year 1813.<sup>5</sup>**

*Joy on seeing the faithful flocking to hear the word of God. Creation and man's fall. Redemption. Sacrament of penance: institution, necessity. Why one should make one's confession as soon as possible. Advantages of a good confession. The compassion of confessors.*

March 28, 1813

When we ascended this pulpit, dedicated as it is to truth, for the first time, we frankly confessed our fears that our lack of familiarity with the

<sup>5</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM V-3. This instruction, like the others given during Lent 1813, seems to be a personal composition of Father de Mazenod; it lets us see that his teaching was solid, no doubt a little difficult for his audience to follow, all the more as he used few concrete examples. We publish this sermon as a specimen, but also because in it Eugene expresses his joy at seeing the church full despite his lack of familiarity with Provençal and he speaks, at the end, of the confessors' dispositions of welcome and mercy, thus shedding light on himself and, later, on his first collaborators who spent so many hours in the confessional.

Provençal language would constitute an obstacle to the fruitfulness of our instructions. Encouraged however by a desire to serve you, we placed all our trust in the Lord and our hope has not been in vain, as the outcome has been that the holy word transmitted to you has received an eager welcome. Praise the Lord for that, my brothers, and so over-joyed am I on that account that I am unable to contain it. Is this for my self-glorification? God forbid, perish the thought, one that is as hurtful to God, sole author of all Good, as it is damaging and pernicious to any fool so complacent as to entertain it. The only claim I have is on your prayers, and all I deserve is to be pointed out as a wretched sinner. But called by my vocation to be the servant and priest of the poor to whose service I would like to be able to devote my whole life, I cannot help being touched when I see the eagerness of the poor to hear my voice; but what fills my cup of joy to overflowing is that this abundant concourse is clear proof that there are still in our town a considerable number of true Israelites who have not bent the knee to Baal, Christians who still love their religion, love to receive instruction, want to practise it, for it is quite evident that only love of your holy Law brings you to our presence, since in imitation of the Apostle we have not come to announce the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the elevated discourses of a human eloquence and wisdom, no, we have not used human wisdom as we talked, but the simple word of God stripped of every ornament, placed so far as in us lay within the grasp of the simplest.<sup>6</sup>

Continue, my brothers, to listen to it with faith and attention. I begin.

After God had created this beautiful universe and all the wonders it contains, reflecting that this mute nature was incapable of glorifying his holy name, he wished to form a creature more perfect still who would serve as the interpreter of all his other works, inanimate or lacking in reason, and repay in a freely given act of homage the glory and honour due to his sovereign Majesty.

He formed man; he empowered him with a rational soul which he made in his image; his beneficent and generous hand loaded him with every kind of gift; he made him king of the earth which he submitted to his

<sup>6</sup> In the margin: "Our temples are your asylums. There it is in your needs and sufferings you find the helps and consolations that you looked for in vain elsewhere. Your Master lives there and awaits you there to bring you an efficacious remedy for all your ills. By the ministry of his priests he regenerates you in the waters of baptism, he reconciles you in the tribunals of penance, instructs you in the truth-demanding pulpit. He gives himself to you to be your strength against the enemies of your salvation, your support in the fatigues of your pilgrimage. Take your delight then in living in this holy place."

laws, he destined him in a word to spend his days in happiness, one day succeeding another endlessly in peace and happiness.

But so that in this place of sovereign independence, and while delighting in this general domination, he would not forget that he still had over him a master more powerful than [p. 3] he to whom he owed homage, God submitted him to the most trifling of privations, if indeed one can call it that, the prohibition he gave him not to eat of the fruit of just one tree out of the vast abundance of an infinite number of others.<sup>7</sup>

However, who would believe it! Ungrateful and perfidious man violated that sole commandment that was so easy a one to keep, and thus voluntarily exposed himself to the just punishment of which he had been warned and which in fact he and all his race now undergo.

As a result of this disobedience, all men were subjected to death, and if the Son of God, by an effect of his immense charity for men, had not become incarnate, we would like the rebel angels have all been eternally damned.

This is not the place to bring you to see the justice of that harsh condemnation. A whole instruction would scarcely suffice to explain this dogma of our faith to you. Let it suffice for now for us to remind you that O.L.J.C. has expiated this sin, by his death, and that the application which is made for us of his merits by baptism, wipes out in us this stain in such a way that it is no longer an obstacle to the eternal happiness to which we were called, and that we are delivered from the hell which should have been our heritage.

One would think, my brothers, that after such an excess of love, Our Saviour's charity would have been satisfied, and that grateful men, happy to have escaped an inevitable doom [p. 4] would have devoted the whole rest of their lives solely to proving to the Lord by their fidelity how they appreciated the price of the grace that he had acquired for them by his blood.

That is how the early Christians understood it, and seeing how they lived one would have said that the Saviour had carried prudence to excess in instituting another sacrament which has the virtue of wiping out sins committed after baptism. A crime like that seemed impossible. But no, dear

<sup>7</sup> In the margin: "Parable of the million and the small coin. It is as if a great king ..."

brothers, we have fallen away so dreadfully from the state of our Fathers, and from the tenderest age so multiplied our sins that it would be impossible for us to recall their number, and what would have become of us if the Lord, foreseeing our shipwreck had not left us a raft to save ourselves and get us out of the abyss of our iniquity. In a word, who in our day would have been saved if our divine Master had not established in his Church the sacrament of penance? Who would have been saved, since despite this saving sacrament most Christians damn themselves still. Who would believe it if we did not see it with our own eyes! What profound human malice, what ingratitude that hell with all its torments would not suffice to punish!

Let us try, brothers, to penetrate the cause of such disorder so as to bring a prompt and efficacious remedy.

The sacrament of penance is of no avail [p. 5] to two classes of people, those who no longer approach it, and those who do not approach it with suitable dispositions.

The details into which we are about to enter will, I hope, win over both kinds to a better frame of mind. The former will learn that by obstinately staying away from the sacrament of penance, as well as voluntarily depriving themselves of all the merits that they may have gathered up for eternity, place themselves in imminent danger of losing their souls, as the sacrament of penance is the only means for receiving remission of one's sins. The second group, that their confessions as they make them serve but to render them more guilty, and to blind them on the very edge of the precipice, for when one goes to confession one must do it in the way prescribed by God.

The few virtuous Christians who are still able to appreciate the excellence of the gift that has been given them in this sacrament and who try to approach it with good dispositions, will have their attention drawn perhaps to various imperfections in what they do, and which place an obstacle to a greater abundance of graces that they might otherwise derive from it.

As there is so much to say, it will form the topic of my two remaining instructions.

Every Christian knows that there is a sacrament of penance instituted by O.L.J.C. for the remission of sins committed after baptism. That approved priests are the only ministers of this sacrament in virtue of the power that was given them by the Lord when he said to St. Peter: *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven*, [p. 6] and those other words to all his Apostles: *all that you unloose on earth shall be unloosed in heaven and*

*all that you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and again: whose sins you shall remit shall be remitted, and those you shall retain shall be retained.*

Now my brothers, from these holy words one must conclude with all the Fathers, and in conformity with the infallible teaching of the Church to the necessity of confession as in order that the priest may exercise this judgement — pay special attention to this argument — in order that he may remit or retain, that he may unloose or bind, that is, so that he may impose the appropriate satisfaction, it is necessary that he know the faults of sinners, since it is only in the light of the number and quality of these faults that he may ground a sure judgement, pronounce an equitable sentence, impose a satisfaction in proportion to the crimes, just as a judge will not dare to condemn or absolve someone whom he has not heard, both the accusation and the witnesses, etc.

How can I possibly fail to afford you the opportunity of seeing the constant tradition and the crowd of witnesses which demonstrates the uniformity and perpetuity of this teaching going back to the time of the Apostles? But, however consoling this imposing cloud of witnesses would certainly be for your faith, I have to refrain from this presentation and restrict myself, in a subject so vast, to the things that are most important.

[p. 7]. So, my brothers, after having thus given solid proofs as I have just done from the scriptures of the necessity of confession, I will add only the decision of the holy Council of Trent which, based on the word of God and the tradition of all ages, defined that the sacrament of penance is no less necessary for those who have fallen, after baptism, than baptism is for those who have not yet been regenerated.

No, my brothers, as you see, there is no other way to return to grace with God after one has offended him, and again we must count ourselves fortunate that the Lord has left us this raft to save us from the shipwreck. And what can you be thinking of when you stay away, to what dangers are you not exposing yourselves? How can you live in such a deplorable state; enemies of God, who will punish you all the more severely because he has been waiting for you for so long, your own worst enemies, depriving yourselves of all the merits, all the graces, all the consolations which would fill your souls once you had destroyed sin by virtue of the sacrament; even if you could be sure of experiencing a conversion at the moment of death, you would still be very guilty, you would be acting foolishly to deprive yourselves for the whole of your lives of God's friendship and all the advantages which would follow that wonderful union. What will it be like

when you are in the state of uncertainty over that last-minute conversion, why do I say uncertainty when in all probability you will die as you have lived. If you find it so hard to renounce sin now [p. 8] with your mental powers still intact, what will it be like when, enfeebled by illness, you will just be conscious enough to see the abyss you have dug for yourselves beneath your feet. Besides, how can you tell if you will have a period of sickness before you die? Have you made a pact with death for it to leave you the choice of your end? Who knows? Perhaps you are destined for a lingering death, or to die of a stroke, perhaps you will be dead before this day is out. How many examples have not shown that these unforeseen events can happen; and is it not a commonplace for people to remark on the number of sudden deaths there are, has not this town provided us with a large number of frightful catastrophes even in the course of this year? So is it your wish to die in your present state? No, certainly, since hell, and what a hell, would be your dreadful lot for all eternity. So be converted, come back to God, and to that end take the only means that the Lord has left you. Take this first step, the only one you will find difficult, come to us. [p. 9] Come and show your wounds to the only doctors whom God has established to cure them; as you know, the lepers in the Gospel were ordered to go and present themselves to the priests, and the Lord who had heard their prayer wished to heal them only through the ministry of those to whom he had given the power on earth. It is the same for us, it is the Lord who heals, for it belongs only to God to work this miracle; but he heals through his ministers, and he heals as God, for note that one word suffices for this resurrection, as he needed but one word to create the Universe.

So what is it still holds you in these bonds of sin? Would it be because you think it will be easy for you to burst them when it pleases you? But apart from my having shown you that you could not prudently promise yourself a quarter of an hour's life, and that death can surprise you when you least expect it, who has told you that this good will that you [p. 10] are suppressing at the moment when the Lord is giving it to you, will be given to you again? For myself I know that the more you delay, the less hope you will have of making a sincere return to God. Difficulties will keep on cropping up and you will die in your sins.

Imagine a poor man who is on the way to market and loses his purse; as soon as he finds out he becomes sad, loses his appetite, is inconsolable, he would give his life's blood to find it again. This loss seems irremedial. He is wrong; time lessens it each day, slowly he recovers his good spirits; it gradually vanishes from his mind.

That is how it is with sin. At the actual moment that one commits it, remorse makes one feel it; it spurs the sinner to return to God, and the sinner would not be far from doing this as he has a lively feeling then of the enormity of his ingratitude, but he defers it, puts it off, Easter is not far off, he will do his duty then. Illusion, all is illusion. In the meantime remorse wears off, sin seems less horrible, one gets used to its ugliness, Easter comes and it is still not the right moment. Sins multiply, for as St. Thomas says, sin that is not wiped out by penance in no time at all and as if by an impetus of its own seduces one into committing another; one gets used to them, one becomes hard, and this is followed by impenitence, and that by eternal damnation.

Christians, I ask you in all honesty, has not that been the sad tale of our own experience? Perhaps you have reached that point of hardness when God's word sounds in vain in your ears because of the obstinacy with which you bar it entry to your heart. You [p. 11] are perhaps like those swallows which take refuge in a belfry but at the first dong of the bell come flying out in all directions, but recovering then from their first fright gradually come back to the tower, eventually go back in, and become accustomed to the noise which had bothered them at first, they set up there again their home, and even build their nests there.

In the same way the first instructions you heard, after your sin, produced in you a salutary unease. You took some steps to deal with it. Who knows? Perhaps you even went so far as to take the resolution to give yourself to God and renounce sin for ever, but led by passion you became accustomed to the threats of the Holy Spirit, and became insensible to it. But tremble, sinners, for that divine word is the two-edged sword that wounds, that kills when it does not heal.

I think, brothers, I have given you more than enough reasons to make up your minds and stop saying no to a precept whose violation would lead to your eternal damnation.

I am going to make use of the short time that remains to make you aware in a succinct way of the benefits that result from a good confession so that you do not labour under the impression that the price of returning to God and of giving him a heart that you ought never to have taken from him is too high.

[p. 12] Your experience, I hope, will be like that of the prophet Ezekiel. The Angel of the Lord showed him an enormous book full of threats, complaints, groans, and after ordering him to eat it, this book,

bitter in appearance, was hardly in the mouth of the prophet when there flowed from it a delicious liquid that filled him with strength.

Yes, if you go only by appearances, the confession that the Lord is offering you seems bitter, *scriptae sunt in eo lamentationes et carmen et vae*, but put the book to your mouth, *comede volumen istud*, try, make the avowal of your sins, with a repentant heart, and you will experience how sweet it is to serve the Lord with a pure conscience, *et factum est in ore meo sicut mel dulce* (Ez. 2,9; 3, 1.3).

The first gain, one truly beyond price that the sinner derives from a good confession, is that of returning to God's grace. One would have to grasp all that the friendship of its God means to a soul to have a just idea of this precious gain. Let him just remind us of what he himself says in Scripture: that the love of the tenderest mother for the dear babe at her breast is still not to be compared to the love he has for us; that he has reserved in his mercy ineffable treasures of graces and happiness for those whom he loves, that he prepares for them an eternal dwelling of glory and felicity, in a word, that nothing short of his omnipotence suffices to satisfy the passion that he has to make happy the faithful soul. [p. 13] Compare that state with the eternal punishments reserved for the sinner if he persisted in his unfaithfulness.

But the Lord does not wait until after death to give the penitent soul an experience of the whole breadth of his mercy. Already in this life he fills it with the most signal favours, the passions of every sort that formerly tyrannised the sinner's soul give way to that peace of good conscience, that pure joy, that chaste love that make one swim in a sea of interior delights, foretaste of eternal happiness of which they are an overflow.

From child of malediction that the sinner was, he becomes a child of God, he reenters on all his rights to the eternal inheritance that was won for him by the Blood of the Saviour. The merits he had managed to accumulate before his sin, and which would have counted for nothing if he had died in God's enmity, are returned to him again. His soul made alive by the grace of his reconciliation no longer does anything that does not have value for heaven: a glass of cold water, the least of works done with faith and love and with still greater reason submission and resignation before all the evils that rain down on every part of this vale of tears, take on for this soul the value of degrees of glory infinite in their duration, of which God himself will be the reward.



There, my friends, there you have a feeble sketch of the precious fruits that you derive from your coming back to God. So are we not right, [p. 14] for your own advantage to place continually before your eyes your indispensable duty, and to do it even sometimes with a vehemence that zeal for your salvation as much as the freedom of our ministry fully justifies.

But my brothers our menacing tone is only for the pulpit, in the sacred tribunal our language is quite different, perhaps then we are all too indulgent. We are like those carters whose cart has got stuck in the mud, they set about pulling it out with all their strength; you see them shoving, now at the wheel, now at the shafts; when all these efforts are of no avail, they arm themselves with a whip, and with loud cries they strike out vigorously and in all directions until with a final heave the cart is righted. Then, leaving aside the whip, they take up the reins to curb the first steps from being too impetuous out of an excessive release of energy, they even go so far as to utter soothing words to these animals whose obstinacy had compelled them to be severe.

In the same way the preacher of the Gospel, saddened at the sight of sinners sinking in the frightful mire of their crimes, bogged down with no desire of getting out, after futilely trying all that their tender charity [p. 15] inspires them to do to have them return onto the way, finally seeing their obstinate determination to be lost, they make to re-echo in their ears the most terrible truths; they arm themselves with the scourge of the holy Word, they redouble their blows until at last these sinners by a generous effort get out of the mire and free themselves, etc.

Then it is with open arms the ministers of Jesus Christ press them close to the hearts and take delight in pouring out balm on all their wounds to ease them.

Yes, my brothers, come, and you will see with what joy we will help you to take up your yoke that will seem too heavy only for the first few moments of your conversion, for when once you are freed from sin, light will take the place of the deep shadows that reigned in your souls, God will seem so lovable to you, he will fill your hearts with so great a consolation, he will invest you with so great a strength that, like new Sampsons, you will pull down with vigorous arms the gates that held you captive, and loaded with these precious spoils, you will fly to the summit of the mountain, from where you will taunt your enemies who will then seem to you as contemptible, as odious as today they seem seductive.

## 116. To Mr. Charles de Forbin-Janson, c/o the Bishop of Chambery, in Chambery.<sup>8</sup>

*Success of the Lenten sermons preached in Provençal in the Magdalene church, Aix. After Easter, Eugene was engaged in ministry for ten days at Le Puy-Sainte-Reparate. Notwithstanding his intense activity in the prisons, at the seminary and with youth, he is not doing a hundredth part of what Charles is doing. He waits on knowing better God's will.*

L.J.C.

N.1 - Aix, April 9 [1813]

It is not actually April 9 I'm writing you, my dearest friend, but the 22nd, namely straight after my return from my apostolic journey to Le Puy-Sainte-Reparate.<sup>9</sup> I did intend writing you from there and, if I have not done so, it is not for want of thinking of you, for it was impossible for me to go a step without seeing Villelaure,<sup>10</sup> but as one cannot write while one is walking, and clambering over the hills in search of the sick, and preaching, teaching, confessing, baptizing, and carrying out the Holy Week and Easter ceremonies, I have had to postpone until my return what I really wanted to get done sooner. But so it is, having arrived none too soon, that I arm myself with my pen to allay a little your anger, of which I am all too conscious. I will never challenge, dear and wholly splendid Charles, that you do more in 24 hours than I do in 8 days. And you have known for a long time that I would gladly settle for doing a hundredth part of the good that you regularly do; I would never be up to doing all that you take on. And certainly you are quite right in saying that, since you often write to me, I must a fortiori have the time to do likewise. For it is not precisely lack of free time that hinders my writing, but I think I wrote you the real reason for my delay and it is completely true. For the rest, let's leave it at that, for today I am very determined to go on writing to you until I run out of paper.

You want me to write and tell you what I'm doing. Let me first confess that the repugnance I feel in speaking about the little I do is equalled only by the consolation I get from learning of the little miracles God in his

<sup>8</sup> Orig.: Paris, arch. de la Sainte-Enfance. The last paragraph is omitted where Eugene speaks of Charles' family and invites his friend to moderate his zeal.

<sup>9</sup> Le Puy-Sainte-Reparate is a village 16 kilometres north of Aix.

<sup>10</sup> Villelaure, on the right bank of the Durance, opposite Le Puy-Sainte-Reparate on the left bank, was one of the seignories of the Forbin-Janson family.

goodness is working through your ministry. Besides, what I do comes down to little enough. Each Sunday in Lent I have preached in Provençal at 6:00 a.m. in the Magdalene church for the instruction of the people.<sup>11</sup> As you can imagine curiosity brought lots of others besides country-folk; but the latter and the low class of society, whom I had principally in mind, turned up in such numbers that I had reason to hope that it will in his goodness have redounded to God's glory.

When I think how easy I found it to express myself in a tongue which I have never made great use of, as I have scarcely lived in the place, I am tempted to see in this a kind of miracle. There is nothing to be surprised at, however, as I used to ascend the pulpit as I descended from the altar, and you know that I did not forget to beg the Master present to speak himself by my mouth.

The fact is that on Saturday evening, as I was thinking over what I had to say, I found I could not string together three words in Provençal. On Sunday too, I used to go to the prisons to give an instruction to those unfortunates in French, after which I went on to the confessional to hear the confessions until 6:00 p.m. of those of the prisoners who presented themselves. Before and after the instruction, some hymns are sung. I finish up by giving them evening prayer. From there I hurry home, where is gathered together the finest flower of masculine piety in our poor town. After various exercises, I again give a small instruction, quite simple, in conversational vein, which God in his goodness sees to seasoning, and there you have it all.

Next, I go twice a month to the seminary and try, by the regularity of my conduct, to do no dishonour to the character the Lord in his infinite mercy has seen fit to invest me with; and I await orders for what it pleases him to command me. You see there is nothing in all that to marvel at, as everyone does around here. If you credited them, big and little, I am killing myself, etc. Unfortunately, a dreadful cold has taken an obstinate hold on me and won't let go. Passion Sunday, I carried out all my exercises with a fever, quite a small one in truth, but it reduced me on Passion-week Friday to the point of being quite unable to do the ceremony in a church where I was supposed to do it, as my voice was gone; for that fine voice you are familiar with had entirely disappeared, and I was reduced to a mere

<sup>11</sup> Eugene wrote out the French text of his instructions.

“cheep-cheep.”<sup>12</sup> Happily, I got from a vicar general the faculty of offering the holy Sacrifice at home. In it I asked God in his goodness to give me back the use of my throat for the next day, for I was to leave for Le Puy on that day; something that would never be allowed in the state I was in. The remedy worked and next day I fled more than made a normal departure, promising myself to look after myself properly on my return, in view of what I would be doing during the ten days of my mission. Now I shall hold my tongue, for at Le Puy I spoke or yelled all day and coughed all night. I’ll say no more about it, for it is to talk too much of myself; I have a scruple about that, such that I am inclined to scrap my letter. But I won’t as I fear you would find it affected if I said nothing of myself after the repeated requests you have made and be tempted to punish me by ceasing to give me the details that charm and edify me. Let us urge one another on to do good; God knows how long we will be able for it. Life is short. Yesterday again I was called to a poor woman who had dined well and was in her agony just a few hours later. Who knows how long we have to live? . . .

### **117. Journal of the minutes, laws and customs of the Association of Christian Youth, established in Aix under the auspices of the Blessed Virgin, April 25, 1813.**<sup>13</sup>

*Napoleon and his government want to destroy religion by demoralising youth; Eugene will try to preserve them “by inspiring in them in timely fashion a love of virtue, respect for religion, a taste for piety, a horror of vice.”*

April 25, 1813

It is not difficult to grasp that the design of an impious Bonaparte and his infamous government is the entire destruction of the Catholic religion in the States he has usurped. The attachment of the major part of the

<sup>12</sup> Literally: “Piou-piou:” onomatopoeia based on the sound made by young chicks and the groans of the sick.

<sup>13</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM VIII-2a, pp. 1-3. We have several hundred pages written by Eugene de Mazenod on the subject of the Association of Christian Youth in Aix: the Rule and the Statutes (editions of 1813 and 1815-1816), Act of consecration of the Congregationists and Journal of minutes ... We publish here the introductory pages of this Journal and, below, some extracts in which Eugene speaks of himself, cf. [May] 1814 and June 23, 1818.

oppressed peoples to the faith of their fathers emerging as an obstacle to the prompt execution of the execrable project he has conceived as a means of furthering his diabolical policy, he seems to be reduced to letting time do his work along with various means he employs in the meantime to achieve his ends.

Of all the means the one he most counts on is the demoralisation of youth.

The success of his measures is frightful. Already France is covered with lyceums, military schools and other establishments where impiety is encouraged, evil ways at least tolerated, materialism promoted and praised.

Every one of these dreadful schools is filled with young people sacrificed by their parents' avarice rising to the bait of a free place or a half-bursary, the hope of advancement that is promised only to the converted. Any gaps are filled up by unfortunate victims whom the tyrant pitilessly snatches from the bosoms of their families and forces to drink the poisoned cup wherein they must find the germ of their inevitable corruption. Already the work is in large part consummated. A 15-year-old scholar, a pupil in a preparatory or military school, or polytechnic, a page, etc. [p. 2] are so many impious and depraved persons who no longer leave scarcely any hope of their return to good ways, good religious and political principles. They are raised to know no other God than Napoleon. The will of this new Providence which promises them free reign for their vices and promotion for their ambition is the only rule their conduct knows, the only motivator of all their actions. Thus one sees them at the slightest sign from their Idol hastening where his voice summons them, ready to commit every crime it pleases him to ask of their sacrilegious devotion.

This is a frightening picture, but a true one, and I could draw it in even darker colours without fear of being accused of exaggeration. Over and above what is there for all to see and that everyone can grasp, I have in my own experience a thousand proofs of my thesis.

The evil is at its height and we are moving pell-mell in the direction of total dissolution unless God comes very quickly to our aid, for the lesson has struck home among people, even those living under the watchful eyes of their parents, and only too often one sees the frenzied impiety of the son make a shocking contrast with the principles of the father whose impotent authority, or culpable weakness is obliged to yield and often even to connive with his disorders and apostasy. But how can one find words to

deplore unhappy encounters that every day grow more common with young fathers brought up during the Revolution who are worth no more than their sons brought up by Bonaparte!

Sad spectator of this flood of evils, was there no option but to bemoan it in silence without coming up with any remedy? Most certainly not; and though I may be doomed to persecution and failure in the holy enterprise of setting up a dyke against this torrent of iniquity [p. 3], at least I will not have to reproach myself with not having tried. But what means to use to succeed in so great an enterprise? None other than that the seducer himself employs. He believes he cannot achieve the corruption of France except by perverting youth, that is the direction of his efforts. Very well! I too will work on youth; I will make the attempt and strive to preserve them from the evils that menace them and in part they know already, inspiring them in good time with a love of virtue, respect for religion, a taste for piety, a horror for vice.

This method, however excellent in itself, will seem feeble and inefficacious if taken in isolation, employed by myself alone, I agree, but what would not be the effect were it carried out simultaneously throughout our unhappy France!

It is a difficult enterprise, I do not deceive myself, it is even not without its dangers as I am proposing nothing less than to oppose with all my strength the wicked ways of a suspicious Government which persecutes and destroys all that does not support it; but I am unafraid, as I place all my trust in God, seek nothing but his glory and the salvation of souls whom he has ransomed by his Son Our Lord Jesus Christ to whom alone be honour and glory and power for ever and ever.

### **118. To Mr. Bloquetti [Mazenod, in Palermo].<sup>14</sup>**

*Eugene tells his father about his vocation to the priesthood, in spite of his infidelities; joy at being able "to cooperate in the redemption of men."*

May 1 [1813], anniversary of the death of the duchess of Cannizzaro for whom I have just offered the holy Sacrifice.

<sup>14</sup> Orig.: Aix, Bibliothèque Méjanès. In the second part of this brief letter, Eugene gives news of the birth of Caroline, Eugenie's second child, of the death of his grandmother two years since, the marriage of Emile Dedons, etc.

My dear friend, it is high time I found a way of getting my news through to you. I am aware you have had some of it at various times from others than myself. It was difficult in fact for me to give it to you directly in view of the distance involved, but today I have the consolation of being able to do it, and I eagerly seize the opportunity.

I duly received your letter dated December 6, we have not had any since.<sup>15</sup> From it I was very happy to learn that you and your brothers were enjoying perfect health. I like to console myself with the thought that it continues the same, but I beg you to give me confirmation as often as you can; a positive assurance consoles quite differently from a vague hope. You must not be surprised that I do not do as much myself. Often I do not know until it is too late that I could have written you; one has to be on the spot to seize opportunities as they occur.<sup>16</sup>

What things I would have to tell you if I had to go into detail as to all that concerns you, and would to God I had only to tell you of such happy events as Eugene's vocation, elevation to the priesthood, his joy at dashing underfoot every worldly vanity and expectation, the happiness he feels, and that is renewed each day, of offering by the mediation of the holy Victim the prayers of all his loved ones to the Sovereign Majesty of God, to pray without cease for their sanctification, and that all these dear persons, whom he loves as much as he does himself, may live, as he tries to do himself, in such a manner that they may be reunited in heaven, since it is very likely they will not see each other again on earth. Great God, on that topic one could go on forever! Is there not good reason to bless for ever the mercy of God, when one thinks that in spite of so many infidelities, such sins, this good Father, drawing him by the hand away from the abyss into which he may well have fallen, not content to give him his good graces, raises him up to that sublime dignity which enable him to cooperate in the redemption of men, and to expiate his own offences by the efforts that he is able to exert to snatch from hell as many victims as he can. People who are subject to be hurt by his decision, one matured over a long period by

<sup>15</sup> President de Mazenod had also written on April 12, 1812. He began by saying that he had not received any letters from Aix for 4 years and that the last letter from Eugene was dated December 26, 1807.

<sup>16</sup> Napoleon's France was then isolated, thanks to the continental blockade decreed by Napoleon against England on November 21, 1806. The English were masters of the seas and made communication with Sicily difficult, except for the occasional over-land contact.

reflection and after sufficient testing, do not know the gift of God, and can one really call in question that one can be truly happy only where the Master destines us. ...

### **119. To Father de Forbin-Janson, vicar general of the Bishop of Chambéry, in Chambéry.<sup>17</sup>**

*Eugene has set up at the major seminary in Aix a pious association, similar to the one at the seminary of St. Sulpice, in Paris. This association enjoys great success.*

L.J.C

N.2 - May 12, 1813

That's good, dearest friend, that really is what they call getting your own back. Neither my excuses, nor my long letter n.1 have been able to regain for me the privilege your friendship entitled me to of your writing me more often than I would write you. You want nothing but payment cash down and *ad aequalitatem*. Let it be done, for I am languishing through not having had a word from you for what seems like a century. This time, I shall even get ahead. I am sending you the rule that has produced such good results in our seminary. You will see that it is based on our own. I inserted it in its entirety. I believed it useful to add the rest to it, and experience proves me right. Nothing could be more consoling than to see how this house progresses since this useful foundation; as everybody was aware, it had fallen into an alarming laxity. It is not that there was anything against morals, but piety, and especially the spirit of piety, had been, it seems, banished from the house along with those who had tried to inspire it. Since the setting up of the Association, there has been a complete about-face.

At first, the converts were made fun of. As I said before, there was nothing against morals. The whole problem was one of extreme dissipation, a sovereign forgetfulness of every rule, no spirit of piety at all. People could not help noticing the punctuality, recollection, exactness in the smallest things, renewal of fervour, greater frequenting of the sacraments, etc. They called those thought to be aiming in this way at perfection "mystics." It was claimed that it would surely not last. But soon, carried away

<sup>17</sup> Orig.: arch. de la Sainte-Enfance. In the few short paragraphs omitted, Eugene speaks of some of Charles' friends. On the association founded by Eugene in the seminary in Aix, cf. J. Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, I, pp. 407-408.



by their perseverance, good example and, no doubt, their prayers, they were all drawn in by them, and it is a question of who will imitate them best. One would travel a hundred leagues to assist at the recreations of these dear children; one would say they were angels. All the talk is of God and his goodness; there is hymn-singing, and that in groups of 25 or 30. Hike-days are like retreats; they make use of the freedom given them to gather in groups, for spiritual reading, for saying the office of the Blessed Virgin which is not of obligation. In a word, the day is almost wholly employed in pious practices; it brings tears of joy to my eyes. You would have to see how their meetings are spent: the humility, charity with which they accuse themselves and make amends, the zeal that is expended there to correct one another and help others to improve, the feelings of gratitude towards the Lord with which they are all filled, for having procured them so efficacious a means of salvation. Finally, I assure you that I never leave these little meetings without feeling filled myself with the desire for my perfection, by the odour exhaled by the example of these angels.

You may judge their calibre by the deed I am about to recount. It is forbidden to talk in the sort of vestibule located between the door and the parlour. Previously one hardly even remembered this point of the rule. The other day, the mother of one of our dear colleagues called on him. It was the first time that she had seen him since the death of his brother. Judge the emotion of this poor mother and the feelings of the young man. She ran up to him expressing all her tenderness. This new St. Aloysius Gonzaga, without answering a word, takes his mother by the hand, leads her to the parlour, and waits until he has entered before he unburdens himself of all that his heart inspired him with at a moment at once so sweet and so bitter. I know nothing more beautiful in the lives of the saints we cite most readily as models; one must needs be perfect to so command human nature in a like circumstance.

Here is something another one wrote me who was sent a little while ago to be professor in the minor seminary: "As for myself, I am always united with you, as when I was at ... always carrying out, so far as I can, the practices you were so kind as to give me. The good that these practices have done me obliges me again to give you testimony of my sincere gratitude. You can assure my dear brothers on my behalf that they will see infinitely better even than now the importance of the service you have rendered them, when they have left the major seminary. I do not ask you if fervour is being kept up there; love of God and of salvation appear too strongly rooted there to be so soon extinguished. I regret being too far away

to chat with them a little on the things of God. I was so happy! My heart was so full, when I was with them. Did I have to be deprived of it so soon and at the moment I least expected! ... Please convey to them my affectionate regards; tell them to really love God in his goodness. ...”

There you see the stuff these dear children are made of! What hope for the future! I have gone into these details for your edification and for the benefit and encouragement of those you will choose. Again I have to warn you that they only consented to have the rule passed on to you on condition that there will be communion of prayers between them and those whom you will form on their model. All that is deliberately done according to rule. And that is enough on that subject. I return now to make complaint on your silence at a moment when you know that I badly need to get some news from you. Don't you realize that I only get it from you? Have you seen my Father? How is he? Tell me at length about him, for he treats me as if I were not his son. He gives me no sign of life; you can judge how that hurts! ...<sup>18</sup>

## **120. Mr. R[oze]-Joannis, property owner, medical doctor, in Grans, near Salon.<sup>19</sup>**

*Eugene is going to spend some days in St. Laurent with his mother and uncle Roze-Joannis.*

L.J.C.

Aix, June 28, 1813

... then we will spare no effort to look after you in St. Laurent. The air and the waters and our happiness at being together will all contribute to

<sup>18</sup> He is probably referring to Mr. Duclaux, Sulpician; his last letter dates from February 23, 1813 (Rey I, 151).

<sup>19</sup> Orig.: Aix, Hôtel de Boisgelin, Joannis papers. A short letter in which Eugene says that his mother is with Emile Dedons in St. Julien and that Mrs. de Boisgelin, Eugénie's mother-in-law, is ill. We are publishing the paragraph in which Eugene is speaking of his apostolate and the Youth Association, already set up just a few months after his return to Aix. Already on February 23, 1813, Mr. Duclaux was praising him for his Lenten sermons and other activities, adding: "I am carried away with what you say about the young lay people you want to give instructions to every Sunday; there is no work like it; give it all your attention, call upon all your zeal to give them a good formation; give them a rule."

Roze-Joannis, who had doubted the purity of Eugene's intentions on entering the seminary, wrote him on March 13, 1813, after the first Lenten sermons to the poor in the church of the Magdalene: "I cannot tell you, my dear friend, the satisfaction I feel when I learn of the admirable results of the zeal that the spirit of God animates you with is producing. The graces that He communicates to you so abundantly are not for you alone but for the good and salvation of many. The Church needs, today more than ever, ministers who by their instructions

bringing us good health. For myself, it is not health I shall be looking for in that pleasant temperature; but I could not resist the pleasure of being one of the trio, especially after you had expressed the desire for it to be so. It would perhaps have been more perfect to offer it as a sacrifice and carry on putting in my time at the little tasks of the holy ministry that I perform here with some consolation thanks to the blessings the Lord has been pleased to bestow on it; but, as my absence should not be a prolonged one, I thought I could, without being at fault and without putting the fine children Providence seems to have entrusted me with in danger, give way to mother's wishes and to yours. ...

## 121. Retreat Notes.<sup>20</sup>

*Penances he will do for every failure in keeping his rule. His failings. Remedies against pride. Resolutions.*

[December 1813].<sup>21</sup>

I think I have discerned what most harmed my progress during the course of this year, namely, an excessive inconstancy in my resolutions, and a total lack of discipline in my exercises occasioned by my relations with my neighbour, and by the dissipation consequent on it.

If I want to progress as I ought this year, it is indispensable that I be stern with myself and let nothing sway me from the exact observance of my personal rule. All that is laid down there is necessary to sustain my fervour.

So as not to forget what is contained in it, I will reread it every first Friday of the month, a day I choose for making so far as is possible a retreat of at least half a day.

renew the faith that is becoming extinct, and by their example serve as models for the flock and disturb the negligence of the shepherds. I have the greatest confidence that God has raised you up for this two-fold reason. By observing and teaching at one and the same time, as you do, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you give proof to certain folk, who entertained absurd doubts, that you did not enter the sanctuary by a human pathway but by God's call. I hope that God, who is filled with good will and mercy for all mankind, has united me in blood-ties with a minister according to his heart, so that his powerful intercession may obtain for me pardon for the multitude of sins of which I acknowledge myself guilty. ..."

<sup>20</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-2.

<sup>21</sup> The context shows that these Notes were certainly written in December and, no doubt, in the year 1813. During his 1812 retreat he had drawn up his rule; furthermore we have his retreat notes of December 1814 and there is no allusion in our text to his activities of 1815-1816.

I will impose a penance on myself for each inexcusable failure to keep the articles of my rule. This penance will be proportionate to the gravity of the point neglected. If it is meditation, for example, the penance could not be less than wearing the hairshirt for three hours the next day. If it is the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, 1 hour's hairshirt the next day, if it is spiritual reading, the *Miserere* said prostrate face down on the ground, or arms crosswise, if it is the reading of Holy Scripture, two hours' hairshirt the next day.

[p. 2] The fact is that I have no other means of escaping from the deplorable state of langour into which I have fallen, than to bind myself to the exact observance of my rule. So it is in all seriousness that I commit myself to follow it, and if this promise that I make with myself were still insufficient and I perceived that I was beginning to fall away, I will not hesitate to oblige myself to the principal articles such as meditation, scripture reading, visit to the Blessed Sacrament, etc., by a vow in the strict sense.

In this absence of order the dominant failings have wreaked havoc with me; I recognised it even before going on retreat. I will labour therefore to wage war implacably on them, for I am quite determined to labour more seriously at my perfection, or to express it better at my conversion which is still very imperfect.

The first and most imperious of them all is pride and its numerous cortège: vanity, self-love, etc., an excessive tendency to speak of the good I do.

Then sensitivity of heart which makes me love with too much tenderness those men in whom I see lovable qualities and those especially by whom I am loved, I say men not women because I have nothing to correct in regard to women with whom, in general, I have only very distant relationships and then surrounded by many precautions.

Then again a huge negligence, or to be frank, a veritable laziness in fulfilling my duties of piety, an habitual failure to direct my intention in my actions, and to subject them to scrutiny after I have acted.

Insufficient purity of intention; there is always some self-seeking in everything I do.

[p. 3] Remedy against pride:

1. In my meditation, I will recall all my sins in general and I will ask myself then if there is anything there to boast about.

2. I will not speak of the good I do either directly or indirectly, except when this is necessary for the glory of God or to repulse some attack; but then I will speak only after directing my intention.

3. I will gladly speak of the good of those whose reputation might overshadow mine, and I will acquiesce with all my soul in the praises that they might receive, even if they seem to me to be exaggerated.

4. I will patiently and with resignation and even with joy if possible endure the contradictions I meet with in the accomplishment of my plans, and in the works that God inspires me to do. I will redouble my prayers, both for the successful outcome of the affair and for the people who, seemingly deceived, go against me; especially I will absolutely refrain from grumbling, complaining about them, and getting my own back by heaping ridicule on them. However, I will not be afraid to press my case with those who are in a position to accede to it.

5. Before beginning an action of any importance, and before every one if possible, I will offer it to God, entirely renouncing my own mind and the complacency which might be mingled with it.

6. Before leaving my room, if I am alone, I will prostrate myself at the feet of my crucifix to offer to God all I do outside the house, and to beg my Saviour to watch over me so that I do not offend him, etc. I will also kiss the feet of the crucifix.

If there are people present, I will perform outwardly only this last action. The rest I will do interiorly.

[p. 4] Some of my relations with my neighbour are necessary, some could be reduced in part, or at least regulated.

In the year that is ending, I have been too much at the disposition of the first-comer; this is a misunderstood charity, my time has been wasted, it is my fault; this must be dealt with. So, unless someone has some pressing business to communicate to me, I will keep out of everyone's sight in the mornings.

I will only be available during my dinner or afterwards, i.e., from 4 to 6:30.

On the stroke of 6:30 I will leave for the church to make my visit. There is no one who would not have the grace to excuse me. For the rest, whether they like it or not, it should be all the same to me.

Thursday being a day of upheaval on account of the congregation, I will take advantage of the intervals either to see the people with whom I have business or to write letters, etc.

I will keep watch over my heart to keep it always free from every too-lively affection, and over my senses not to expose them to rebellion.

One last thing I must mention is that next year I must take precautions not to be disturbed during my retreat as I was this year; too often people stormed the barriers that separate me from the world, during this brief period of days; should it be for the good, utility of my neighbour, well and good, but is it not just that out of the 365 days there should be ten for me alone?

## 122. Reformation<sup>22</sup>

*Resolutions.*

1813-1815<sup>23</sup>

1. To hold myself to the letter of my rule.
  2. And especially to get up early enough to do my oraison before mass.
  3. To keep strictly to not receiving anyone except by appointment, excepting urgent business or that of strangers.
  4. To eat only two courses at dinner.
  5. To fast not only on Fridays but Saturdays too.
  6. To have the mirror taken out that is in my room.
  7. To sleep on planks on Fridays; wear the hair-shirt that day.
  8. Say my office on my knees or seated or standing, never walking.
  9. To make particular examen and do the New Testament reading after lunch.
  10. To oblige Maur to accuse me of my faults in the morning at oraison.
- Duties towards my neighbour: superiors, equals, inferiors, priests, men, women, children.
- Prayer, good example, help in spiritual and corporal needs.

<sup>22</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-2.

<sup>23</sup> Undated, but before the departure of Brother Maur in December 1815, cf. Rey I, 176.

Duties towards the Church: the most absolute devotion, filial love. Blind obedience toward all her decisions. Inviolable attachment to the faith, zeal for discipline and to spread her spiritual empire which is none other than that of Jesus Christ.

### 123. To Father de Janson, vicar general of Chambéry, in Chambéry.<sup>24</sup>

*Eugene gives Charles details of his serious illness, in March and April 1814. While in a state of delirium, he spoke only of the ministry. Convalescence at the Enclos.*

L.J.C.

Aix, April 23, 1814

In all likelihood, my dear friend Charles thinks me dead, since he has given up giving me news of himself. And he has good reason to think that, if he has not received the little letter I wrote him from my bed, before almost having the strength to take pen in hand against the advice of the doctors and all those around me. I did not listen to any of them and I did not even give a thought to my health, as I wanted to give him assurance about how I was.<sup>25</sup>

My dear friend, if you knew how happy I was when I was told that, in my delirium which lasted the whole time of my illness beginning on the very day I had the happiness of receiving the last sacraments, I was busy in talking non-stop of the good God, preaching, etc. ... , and talking of you. What! said I, you keep me here with nothing to do while I have so much to do; everything is suffering from my idleness; I am dishonouring my ministry; for the life of me, I will not be able to show my face to my friend de Janson; what do you think he will say, a man who never considers himself and sacrifices himself for the good of the Church.

<sup>24</sup> Orig.: Paris, arch. de la Sainte-Boniface. In the ms., Chambéry is crossed out. In another handwriting is written: "Poste restante à Rome." In the final paragraphs, which are omitted, Eugene says that the Aix Chapter has annulled the powers of Archbishop Jauffret, named archbishop of Aix by Napoleon.

<sup>25</sup> In January 1814, the allies invaded France. Napoleon, whose armies were in flight, sent the Pope, a prisoner in Paris, in the direction of Savona, passing through Aix (cf. letter of Eugene to Charles, February 19, 1814). At the same time he concentrated in the Midi the Austrian prisoners of war. Aix received two thousand. Typhus broke out, doctors and the chaplain went down with it. Eugene offered his services to the diocesan administration to replace the latter. He too caught the sickness, was confined to bed on March 10 and received extreme unction on the 14th, cf. J. Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, I, pp. 421-424.

You see that while delirious, I was paying you compliments, while when I am in good health I scold you, dear friend. I have every reason to dread your suffering the same misfortune that befell me. My illness will cost me perhaps six months of idleness. I am so weak! So incapable of applying myself to anything! What endless convalescence! And on top of that the unavoidable precautions against a relapse! Ah, do not get sick I beg you! I was counting like you, and with more reason than you, on my strong constitution; I was none the less, on March 19, the feast day of our holy Patron, on the point of death and, without the intercession of that saint in whom I have always had the greatest confidence and the countless novenas, communions and masses that were made and said for me, I would without any doubt be dead. But here I am now with it behind me and, today the 24th, for the first time I showed my face on the street. I plan going in eight or ten days time to set up house at an enclos we have at the town gates, to breathe the country air. That is the doctor's advice. If you saw me, you would boast of your stoutness. I give cause for anxiety; but, thanks be to God, the chest, this piece of furniture that is so necessary to us, is all right. I have had the happiness of saying holy mass since the 20th, the feast of Saint Joseph in our Fréjus breviary. I was still very weak, but everything was wonderful. It is only the genuflections that still give me some trouble. Tomorrow, I will offer the holy Sacrifice for you. ...

Good-bye, my dear friend. Write to me and look after yourself. I do not tell you to pray for me: that is something agreed between us. But do not forget to inculcate in all those — I mean all good Christians — whom you meet that we are under an obligation to offer God our most fervent thanks on our own account and for the ungrateful who will not give it a single thought.

## **124. Journal of minutes, laws and customs of the Association of Christian Youth ... , [May] 1814.<sup>26</sup>**

*Admirable behaviour of the congreganists at the time of Eugene's grave illness in March-April 1814.*

[May 1814]

Interruption due to the illness of the Director. Record of what was done during this illness.

<sup>26</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Postulation DM VIII-2a, pp. 7-10.



Since the meeting held this day [March 6] there are no further ones until May 15. This long interruption was due to the very dangerous illness which brought the Director to [p. 8] death's door. He was confined to his bed on March 10, having had a fever for some days; on the 14th he received holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction.

As it is he who is drawing up these minutes, how could he fail to record here the testimonies of the tender interest that these dear children have shown towards him in this situation? Ah! they are indelibly engraved on his heart, and never will what they did for him be erased from his memory. The affection that he will always keep in their regard, the prayers he will not cease to make for their salvation, and all the attention he will continue to lavish on them to facilitate their having the means to attain it, will be proof of his thanks. Dear children, allow me also to write down in this register, which must serve for the instruction of those who have the happiness of following in your footsteps, the feelings of love, esteem, thanks, admiration that you have inspired in me by your behaviour in my regard. How could I not have for you a father's heart after you have proved that you love me as if you were my children? It is true that I loved you first, but is it not a merit at your age to be able to appreciate a feeling that was principally directed towards your souls for the salvation of which I would gladly have contributed at the cost of my blood.

As soon as I had arranged for the sacraments that I thought would be the last I would receive in my life to be brought to me, the news was communicated to the college. Immediately all the congreganists spontaneously asked to leave class and went in haste to the church of St. Jean from where holy Viaticum would be brought to me. They were given candles, the prefect and vice-prefect got hold of lanterns, and at the departure of the cortège they lined up two by two immediately in front of the priests. The whole town has told me that one could read on their faces what was going on in their hearts [p. 9] at that moment when they saw themselves as being in danger of losing the best and dearest friend they had. I attribute to their recollection and to the touching spectacle they presented at that moment of their piety for God and their affection for me, as much as the interest of my fellow citizens this extraordinary affluence of people that took place when I was administered.

The state in which they saw me, the difficulty that I had in saying some words before receiving the body of O.L. Jesus Christ hurt them greatly,

they were all the more sensible of my situation as in the few words I was able to offer my concern was for them, but their unease reached its height when they were informed that I had lost consciousness two or three hours after receiving the Sacraments.

That is when they displayed those feelings of faith and trust in God that I pray the Lord will keep them in always. They were not content to come several times a day to my door to get news of me that was every day more alarming; they were not slow to grasp that one must seek from God what men no longer trusted in themselves to obtain by their art. They turned in effect to the Supreme Moderator of all things, and relying on the powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of great St. Joseph, and other saints to whom they were most devoted, they began those prayers which, joined with the others that people in their charity made for me, snatched me from the jaws of death whose prey I had well-nigh become.

And how could the goodness of God have failed to be touched by the fervour, trust, perseverance with which these young people prayed the Lord to give them back their father. All those who witnessed it shed tears and could not refrain from joining in this exercise of charity and truly filial piety. [p. 10] And why should I refrain from adding a detail that increases the merit of what they did? We were in the month of March, at the time when the rigour of the cold most makes itself felt; dear children, would that you could read my heart as I write these lines!!! Well, so that the work of mercy that they wanted to do for me should not interfere with their studies, they rose before the dawn and betook themselves at early morning in spite of the frost to the church where each day they assisted at the Sacrifice which was offered in their name at the cost of their little savings destined for their little pleasures. In the evening, when they came out of school, they gathered again in the church of the Magdalene to make together novenas that became quasi-public.

Ah! It is truly fitting that there is talk throughout the town of such praiseworthy conduct, and that for those who have in this way earned the approval of all honest folk there should arise the sincerest esteem. But this first reward will be, I confidently hope, but the prelude of one more lasting that the Lord, the just rewarder of virtue, keeps for them in heaven.

Finally the Lord having yielded to the prayers of this dear band of youth, I was soon able to go in person to thank God at the feet of those same altars where he had been invoked on my behalf with so much fervour.

Meeting in the church of the Magdalene to assist at a mass of thanksgiving for the restoration of the health of the Director.

May 3rd, day of the finding of the true Cross, I convoked all the congreganists in the church of St. Magdalene to assist at the mass that I had to say for them at the altar of the Cross.

(I have said holy mass at home since April 20th.)

Before beginning the Sacrifice I addressed a few words to them that were spoken from my heart and were understood by theirs and which moved us all alike to acquit ourselves in as saintly a way as we could during the holy Mysteries of the duties of love and thanksgiving of which we were indebted to God, Father of mercy, who is never deaf to the prayer of those who place in him all their trust: *non est oblitus clamorem pauperum* (Ps. 9:13).

## **125. To Father de Forbin-Janson, vicar general of Chambéry, in Rome. Poste restante. Italy.<sup>27</sup>**

*Regret at not having been able to go with Charles to Rome. He asks him to procure some relics and obtain from the Pope the approval of the congregation of youth and indulgences for that association and for himself. The association's aim and activities. Charles' plans. He asks that while he is in the presence of the Pope and Cardinals he will speak of the Jesuits and the Bishops named by Napoleon. Souvenir of good B. Zinelli.*

L.J.C.

[June 1814]<sup>28</sup>

I envy your good fortune, my very dear Charles, but there is no jealousy. But I have to say it would have been nice if I could have shared it. God in his goodness has not given me that grace, for that is how I would have viewed the chance to visit so many holy places, to find myself among so great a number of precious souvenirs. There is no more to be said. It wanted only you to get me going. I am just back from my pilgrimage. I do not know how our third companion will take it. Perhaps he will accuse you of inconstancy, and make the trip alone. For my part, annoyed as I am that you went off without me, I excuse you, for I have the feeling that the opportunity was attractive.<sup>29</sup> And, without reproaching you at all, I will

<sup>27</sup> Orig.: Paris, arch. de la Sainte-Enfance. In the paragraphs left out, Eugene copies out the petition to the Pope for the erection of the youth congregation and for indulgences.

<sup>28</sup> An undated letter, but on the postal arrival stamp is written: 1 luglio (July 1).

<sup>29</sup> When writing to his mother on June 26, 1812, Eugene made known his intention of returning to Aix in October, but said he would be making a trip later on of some months' duration. He already had it in mind no doubt to go to Rome with Forbin-Janson who left in the Spring of 1814 without notifying his friends.

give you my commissions and, so as not to forget them, I will begin with them.

Please be so kind as to get me a genuine relic of St. Philip Neri, who is one of the patrons of my little congregation, and one of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, another patron; but I want genuine ones. And as the Lord seems to want to bless the attentions I am giving it, both by expanding it in numbers and in giving an increase to the piety of those poor abandoned young people, I would be glad if you would present a request to the Holy Father for him to approve it and grant it certain indulgences, that I will indicate, leaving it open for you to make additions to my requests, when drawing up the request in approved form, if you see fit to do so. You know what my intention is in setting up this association: it is to form Christians worthy of bearing the name, to give instruction to those young people who, without my help would never have got beyond the letter of their catechism, to separate them from dangerous company, and hold them by the attraction of amusements suitable to their age. I have drawn up a rule for them that is a little masterpiece, which they observe with admirable punctiliousness. Since their number has expanded, we have made an innovation; they have to pass some tests, etc. No one can enrol just at will. If I do not watch out these children will take all my time. It seems they cannot live without me, and I can really perceive the good that the Lord does them through my ministry. I have a pretty enclos at the town gate. There I have got up a chapel for our spiritual exercises. In the garden they have all the space they need to play prisoners' base, bowls, etc. They gather there every Sunday and Thursday. On the stroke of seven on Sunday, we begin with a little reading to give time for people to come. Then Matins of the Blessed Virgin is said. After that I give an instruction of about an hour, more or less as indicated on the day. The instruction is followed by Lauds, during which I get vested for holy mass. After mass, the little hours of the Blessed Virgin, and this ends our morning exercises. Lunch is taken before returning to town, where we arrive usually in time for high mass. After dinner, after Vespers, an hour's catechism *per i bisognosi*. Everyone is present however. The whole of the time remaining until evening is spent in play. The change that takes place in most of the young people who come to my place (that is what distinguishes them from the other young people in the town: "he goes to Mr. de Mazenod's"), has been so striking that Christian parents, all of them, would like me to take charge of their children. But it calls for more conditions than their simply wanting it. It is to cement more the good that

is done in this congregation that I would like to obtain from the sovereign Pontiff some indulgences, approvals, and encouragements. You understand the effect that that would produce. ...

Now I come back to yourself. I was really overjoyed at all the happiness you have experienced on your journey. This is not ungenerous of me. If I had been with you, I would have explained things a little to the holy bishop of *Nocera*.<sup>30</sup> It is not time yet for you to go to the next world. When it is a question of asking of a superior, and above all a superior like the Vicar of Jesus Christ, a decision of such importance as that you were expecting from him, one must be quite candid in setting out the facts, etc. If I had thought there were time, I would have written to the bishop of Nocera on this point. In your dialogue with the Sovereign Pontiff, how is it you did not speak of the Jesuits?<sup>31</sup> How is it you did not insist on the necessity of pronouncing on all the outrages that people have permitted themselves against the discipline of the Church and the rights of the Holy See, standing on<sup>32</sup> so-called freedoms that everyone claims to interpret according to the inspirations of his fear, ambition, or avarice. Insist on this, when you are in Rome, with all the cardinals.<sup>33</sup> Remind them forcibly how often in recent times scandalous examples have prevailed, remaining unpunished under the reigns of Henry IV and Louis XIV. I constantly keep hearing here about one Mr. de Cosnac, named archbishop of Aix by Louis XIV during his struggles with the Roman Curia, who took on the administration of the diocese and subsequently received his Bulls for the very same diocese<sup>34</sup> when things were settled. Tell them clearly that the time is ripe

<sup>30</sup> In Geneva Charles had met Monsignor F.L. Piervisani, Bishop of Nocera, who was preaching "a universal renovation" and called for a "general mission". Charles decided immediately to accompany him to Rome and offer himself to the Holy Father "to do with me," he wrote, "as he will," even to going to China (cf. Rey, I, 169).

<sup>31</sup> The Company of Jesus had been suppressed in 1773; it was re-established by Pius in 1814.

<sup>32</sup> "Hucher" instead of "jucher," in French text.

<sup>33</sup> Monsignor Jauffret, Bishop of Metz, had been irregularly imposed on the diocese of Aix by Napoleon. In April, 1814, the Chapter deprived him of the delegated jurisdiction, given in 1811, and replaced in control the vicar capitulars designated on the death of Monsignor de Cicé in 1810. Monsignor Jauffret and other bishops named by Napoleon hoped to obtain jurisdiction from the Pope to remain where Napoleon had put them. Eugene strongly resisted this claim.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel de Cosnac, named Archbishop of Aix in 1687.

to bring about the triumph of true principles. There is no more place in the Church for an episcopal aristocracy than there is for a Presbyterian democracy. All should submit to the head according to the institution of Our Saviour Jesus Christ. Compromises undermine discipline; advantage is taken of silence when duty called for speaking out. Let us determine, if we cannot destroy outright, these detestable so-called freedoms, dangerous haunt where impiety,<sup>35</sup> constitutional schism, insubordination and the revolt of our Bonapartists have ever sought refuge. In this gloomy lair one ends up being a Catholic only in name; at least one often adopts the heterodox stance. People of this ilk come out with it in all its shades. Not when I am around, for they are afraid of me, I do not know why, or rather, I know very well why. This is so true that the Bishop of Metz, according to what they write from Paris, sees me as his most feared adversary, not only in Aix, which might well have some basis, but even in Paris, which is absolutely untrue. Anyway, it is only his principles I contest, as they are not in conformity with the truth and the holy traditions of our Fathers. I could go on forever about this, as it is one of the present wounds of the Church, that it must cure with steel and fire, if more gentle remedies should not work effectively. As to myself, I am quite resolved to defend the Church's discipline with as much zeal and passion as dogma itself.

You did well not to speak of me to the Pope. What would it serve? I ask nothing of anyone except the help of honest prayers to work out my salvation. This feeling is so engraved in my heart that it has not been my wish that anyone remind His Grace the Duke de Berry about me, though I used to spend two hours with him every day when he was in Palermo. Keep up the flow of such interesting details as in your letter dated May 10. How I love to see the head of the Church employ that noble firmness against inexcusably guilty persons. It is a good sign; eventually everything must be restored to order.

Find out if there is still to be found in Rome any Father of the Faith. Speak to him, if you find one, about my dear and holy master, Father Barthelemy Zinelli, who died in Rome in the odour of sanctity in 1802. Get someone to bring you to his tomb to say a prayer in my name, with all the fervour you can muster, to obtain from God by his intercession all the graces that he so often sought for me, when he was on earth. Although I have a good number of his letters, full of the spirit of God which was

<sup>35</sup> A probable reading, as the paper is torn at this point. A possible alternative is "emperor".

constantly at work in him, and have several things in my possession that come from him, if you could get some of his relics for me, you would be bestowing on me an inestimable gift. It is to this holy priest I owe the little shoot of piety I cultivate so badly. But for him I would never have known God. What a lucky man you are to walk the land of the saints! How I regret not being with you! Haven't you too ever felt the emptiness due to the absence of a friend like me? Indeed, if you were not there, for me this trip to Italy would have lost half its delight.

Good-bye, dear friend. May the love of Jesus Christ be ever in our hearts! Before finishing, I urge you again to bring all our influence with the cardinals to bear for the Holy See not to weaken and never to accede to reappointing the nominee-bishops to the sees that they had, I would say, practically usurped. Let the Roman Church come to realize in truth that these folk and their adherents are the enemies of all its rights and prerogatives. They have come out so strongly in this sense that it is a real scandal. When anyone said to the damned soul of Mr. Jauffret that the Pope and cardinals had openly pronounced on the administrations, etc., he made the reply on a number of occasions, and even I believe before the whole University, "Of course, if you consult the Pope and cardinals . . . isn't it in their interest to pronounce against," etc. That statement, taken literally, is at least tending to schism and scandalous heresy, etc. Anyway, their stock is very low here, and I am partly responsible for this good work. However, I know that the nominees are making great efforts in Paris to be reappointed. I still have space to beg you to make an offering of my heart with yours to Saint Peter and all the other saints with whom the Holy City is filled. Ask that I may love Our Lord as much as I desire to love him. That is what attracts me most. Affectionate and heartfelt greetings.

## 126. To President de Mazenod, in Palermo ... <sup>36</sup>

*Serious illness. The Lord has preserved his life thanks to the prayers of the people of Aix for whose salvation he must now work.*

L.J.C.

Aix, June 17, 1814

... It is so long since I received a letter from you that I have lost track of the date. I think the last was dated December, 1812. I am mistaken

<sup>36</sup> Orig.: Aix, Bibliothèque Méjanes. In the omitted paragraphs, Eugene insists that the Mazenods return to France now the throne has been restored. He expresses thanks to the people of Sicily. Mrs. de Mazenod and Armand de Boisgelin were very attentive during Eugene's illness.

perhaps, but I cannot check on it, as I am writing you from the Enclos, where I have been living for the past month. I like it here a lot and I shall stay on [p. 2] well into the winter. The air here is excellent and one is so close to the town that it is really like being there. While here I have entirely got over an illness that brought me to death's door and from which I recovered only through the countless and very fervent prayers that were made for me to the good God in every quarter of the town. The extent of the interest that was taken in me was nothing short of amazing; I am abashed and humbled whenever it comes back to me, and I could never repay it except by the most complete devotion to the salvation and edification of all my dear compatriots. Their solicitude on my behalf was all the more generous in that it was not in service to them that I contracted the disease that would certainly have carried me off were it not for the unlooked for help of prayers which, even if not public, although they were that in some measure, were general. It was at the barracks where some 2000 Austrian prisoners were held that I contracted what they call jail fever. On the morning of St. Joseph's feast day I was close to the end; and as if my holy patron had

<sup>37</sup> The first three letters, lengthy ones, from President de Mazenod, written to Eugene after the fall of Napoleon, are dated July 18, 23, and 24, 1814. In the first two, the President complains that he has received nothing from Aix since May 1, 1813, rejoices over the restoration of the monarchy, explains why he has not yet decided to return to France, etc. The third one opens with an explosion of joy and thanksgiving as he has just received the letter of June 17 in which his son spoke of his grave illness and cure. He then enters into the beautiful prayer of submission to God that we publish below. It is a perfect example of the President's spirituality, and it is with that spirituality that he nourished his son in all his letters to him from 1799 to 1820: "My son, my wonderful son, Zézé, my dear Zézé, sweet consolation of my days of sadness, stay of my old age; Zézé, my beloved, my hope and my life, I throw myself into your arms, I hold you close to my heart. Do you feel the palpitations of this sensitive heart? Do you see its agitation? See my spirit's distress, the confusion of my ideas and give me time to put them in order, and in the meantime, learn what is the reason for the various emotions I am experiencing, it is contained in this little piece of paper I have just received: the letter of June 17. Yes, I still have that precious letter, I hold it in my hands, cover it with kisses, drench it with tears; tears at once of sorrow over the danger you ran, and of joy over the restoration of your health. Great God, God of goodness and mercy, it is towards you that I first address my thoughts, it is before your infinite majesty that I prostrate myself to adore you, glorify you, thank you for the benefits with which you do not cease to shower me notwithstanding my unworthiness; and especially for the unique favour that you have just done me in delivering my son from the terrible illness to which he had succumbed and recalling him from the doors of death to life. If in the ever holy, ever adorable decrees of your divine Providence, it had been decided that my son should have been taken from me, my heart though bruised by a lively sorrow, which in that event would not have affected your compassionate goodness towards a father's love, my heart, I say, in the midst of its affliction would still have had the most just reasons to praise you, to bless you for having accorded to my son the grace of dying a martyr of charity, and a charity like that which determined your only son to sacrifice his mortal life for the salvation of the human race. But after having brought my son down, you



wished to show me the effect of his powerful protection that was being invoked for me on all sides, that very evening I took a turn for the better with astonishing rapidity.<sup>37</sup> The next day or the day after that there was no longer any danger. But I was deprived of the happiness of saying holy mass until April 20 when I began again to acquit myself of this consoling ministry at home. Now I have resumed again all my other little offices of zeal, and I am as well if not better than I was before my illness. ...

**127. To Father de Forbin-Janson, vicar general of Chambéry, canon of the cathedral church of Grenoble, in Rome. Poste restante.**<sup>38</sup>

*Eugene complains because Charles wants to go to China, while there is a great need for zealous priests in France. He himself will labour for the salvation of souls "in the backwoods" of his province. He asks his friend to send him the rules of the youth congregations established by the Jesuits and the Oratorians, and that of St. Leonard of Port Maurice. Firmness against Gallicans, defence of the Pope and the Roman Church.*

L.J.C.

Aix, July 19, 1814

I do not dare continue to indulge the thought that you are still in Rome, my very dear good brother and friend, since in the last letter I received from you, you indicate you will be leaving after the pontifical mass of St. Peter. Even so I am chancing this *mezzo foglio* in the hope you will have changed your mind, something that would not be a novelty with my friend Charles. You really must have habituated me to this inconceivable instability in forming plans for me to take it in my stride to learn from yourself that those two entire years, which you were to spend in Rome to perfect yourself there, etc., all of a sudden are reduced to a fortnight or three weeks. Where will you be going? Are you taking wings from the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff for China? Dear friend, have you really given it thought? Is that where lies what God in his goodness is asking of you? Shouldn't

have raised him up again, after wounding you have healed him, you have let yourself be moved by the fervent prayers of faithful souls who were concerned about his safety. You have given him back to me! With what thanksgivings will I not repay it. O my God, deign to accept them and be pleased to continue to bestow on us glances of mercy. And you, my dear child, receive our congratulations, embraces, share our joy. . . ."

<sup>38</sup> Orig.: Paris, arch. de la Sainte-Boniface. In the paragraphs that have been left out, Eugene criticises the new newspaper: *L'ami de la Religion et du Roi* which is taking up the defence of the bishops nominated by Napoleon.

you reproach yourself with influencing with your own views those of superiors, who would never in all probability have decided that you should, at this moment of time at least, leave the shores of France? Poor France, if everybody who can convince themselves that they have no other desire than the glory of the Sovereign Master and the salvation of souls which have wandered far from the true way, should abandon her, she will be thus delivered over to the plotters of every kind, who beset our princes and devastate each one some portion of the Lord's heritage. I look upon this shocking sight from afar; for in ever greater fidelity to the plan it has pleased God in his goodness to inspire me with, I hide myself in the backwoods of my province to remain for ever unknown. But I am none the less aware of the intrigues of those who do not pass over as we do honours, interests, etc. If I had foreseen entering into all these details, I would have taken a whole page; but what is the point of spending time writing what won't be read? I really wish you had received my last letter. I asked you to get me an approbation for my youth congregation. I commissioned you to ask for various indulgences, etc. Right now I am asking for something more. As well as what I previously indicated, I would like you to add that I am asking for all the same privileges, indulgences, etc., and approbations that the Sovereign Pontiffs granted to the congregations established in the cases of the Jesuits and the Oratorians. And then you might get me the rules of these congregations. I have not waited on that to have one made for my youth, but I would still be quite glad to be acquainted with the others.

There are still a thousand things I want of you, but your precipitate departure is upsetting my plans. I wanted the improved life of St. Philip Neri; I wanted the life *del b. Leonardo da Porto Maurizio*, I wanted his *Discorso mistico*, and whatever else besides he wrote for confessors. I wanted another little Italian work, whose title I do not quite remember, and which was composed, I think, for young missionaries: *Istruzione per gli novelli confessori*; who knows what else besides I wanted! I would need a week to gather my thoughts. *Obbligato* for the fine souvenirs and relic *delle Carceri*,<sup>39</sup> do not forget the one of St. Philip and remember to ask to say mass with the chalice he used to use. A relic of St. Aloysius Gonzaga would be good for me and for my young people too.

Your letter from Rome brought me real pleasure. Everyone to whom I read it shared my feelings. Not being able to be with you in Rome, I might get a little consolation (a little, I say, for you are the reason I will not

<sup>39</sup> *Obbligato*, an Italian word meaning: "much obliged". The relic *delle carceri*: no doubt *del carcere Mamertino* where St. Peter had been imprisoned, according to tradition. This prison is situated at the foot of the Capitoline hill.

perhaps ever be going to that common fatherland), by following you in spirit on your visits and pious pilgrimages, but you move too fast. The very idea of your lightening outings wears me out. As you are finishing I am just beginning. At the risk of being repetitious, if there is still time, exert pressure in the appropriate place and ensure the Holy See does not weaken. It owes it to Christendom to make an example of all those rebels who helped humiliate her, all those ignorant Gallicans who, seeing the Roman Church enslaved, not only did nothing to free her, to console her, but made common cause with the cruel oppressor, entered in a sense into the league with him to despoil her of the prerogatives she held of her divine Founder; in a word, who seeking or believing the lion to be at bay, added the ass's kick. Let there be no mistake that there can be no question here of saving appearances for the sake of public opinion; the latter favors justice. The desire is abroad both to see true principles restored to their vigour and all these ambitious time-servers humiliated! Say it, repeat it *ad nauseam*! If there are those who will say the contrary, it is because they are thinking of their own interests, because they have been paid to deceive. ...

## 128. To Father de Janson, vicar general of Chambéry, in Chambéry.<sup>40</sup>

*Eugene introduces two priests to Charles for the Society of the "Mission de France." He personally cannot join this Society, his works take up all his time and he has to stay in Aix to attend to the needs of his relatives who will shortly be returning from Sicily. He is feeling an attraction to the cloister and feels keenly the lack of a friend.*

L.J.C.

Aix, [September 12, 1814]<sup>41</sup>

I spend my life writing, there is no end to it. The ones with whom I would most like to converse are just the ones I always leave till last, in the

<sup>40</sup> Orig.: Paris, arch. de la Sainte-Enfance. When the letter reached Chambéry, Father de Janson was no longer there. It was forwarded to him at: rue S. Guillaume, n.28, Faubourg St-Germain, in Paris. We possess some other letters from Eugene to Forbin-Janson in which he speaks of his hesitation between two projects: to enter a community of regular life or to found a Society of Missionaries. These letters dated October 28, 1814, October 23 and December 19, 1815, and one in 1816, are published in the *Collection: Ecrits Oblats*, Vol. 6, pp. 2-4, 8-11, 14-16, 20-23.

<sup>41</sup> An undated letter. The postal stamp marking its arrival in Chambéry is September 14, 1814. At the end of the letter Eugene says: "Yesterday I was hearing confessions until one o'clock," and in the morning he was busy with the youth. At that time letters from Aix to Chambéry took two or three days, and the 11th was a Sunday; we can thus deduce that the letter was dated September 12, 1814.

hope of having a little more time. So in the end it is precisely with them I have to be brief.

I received your letter in Marseilles, where pressing business brought me. Back in Aix, I see I am not going to locate you any longer in Chambéry. Even so I am chancing a few lines, so as not to upset you. Why did you not come through here on your return from Rome? One can say more in a few words than in a hundred letters. You might have discovered some missionaries in Marseilles. I am acquainted with one, not the youngest of men, but one who has a lot of experience. You might have had a chat with him. Perhaps he would have been suitable for you. I shall send him your way if he decides to go to Paris. There is a younger priest who has the same bent. He is not lacking in a certain facility, but he lacks depth; he has a mawkish manner that would have to be corrected. Others perhaps might have come forward!

And what about you? you will say! For myself, I am not thinking of it just now. Apart from the fact that I lack completely what is needed to work with success, especially with priests, I foresee that in the near future my affairs are going to be disrupted. My father and uncles are on the point of returning. On their arrival they will badly need my help. And then I will have to find them places. Afterwards I shall be free, if indeed that is possible; for up to now and for a long time I am everyone's servant and at the disposition of the first-comer. This is apparently God's will. I have little taste for this work; I do not know if I will not have to change my vocation. I yearn sometimes for solitude; and the religious Orders that limit themselves to the sanctification of the individuals who follow their Rule and attend to that of others only by prayer, begin to offer me certain attractions.<sup>42</sup> I would not be averse to spending in this fashion the rest of my days; in all truth, it would be a lot different from what I am doing now. Who knows! Perhaps I will finish up there! When I do not have before my eyes the extreme needs of my poor sinners, I will not be so upset at not going to help them. It could well be too that I am fooling myself that I am

<sup>42</sup> As well as his apostolic activities, in 1814 Eugene was much preoccupied by and deeply involved in two temporal matters: the succession to and the estate of Armand's mother (died 1813), that was contested by the children, and preparations to speed up the return of the Mazenods and to find them a living while awaiting their pensions. This latter was very close to Eugene's heart (see the letters to his father dated August 2, 20, and 25, and September 2, 22, etc.). He had thus often to forgo his rule of life and pay a heavy penalty since during his retreat of December 1813 he had imposed on himself severe punishments for each failure and he planned to bind himself to it by vow if he continued to be unfaithful.

more useful to them than I am in reality. In the meantime, however, my time and my attentions are theirs.

This morning again, immediately before going up to the altar, I had to hear confessions. I had scarcely laid aside the priestly vestments when I had to hear them again. Yesterday, it was one o'clock and I had still not said Prime, as I stayed on until then in the confession box. In the morning, I hardly said my thanksgiving, as I had to be with a crowd of young people who had spent a good 2 and three quarter hours in pious exercises.

It cannot continue; always everything for others, nothing for oneself. In the midst of all this turmoil, I am alone. You are my only friend — I mean in the fullest sense of the word — for I am not lacking in those friends who are indeed kind and virtuous but who are lacking in many other respects. But what use are they? Can they soften a grief? Can one discourse with them on the good even that one would like to do? For what! All one would get of it would be compliments or discouragement. In the end, though with sadness, I go my way, placing my trust in God alone. Let us love him always more. Goodbye.

P.S. I did not find in your letter the little piece of the Holy Father's soutane. I have had no news about the other things. And I have not heard a word of those books you bought for me, when you were in Paris, that I paid for and you entrusted to Father Charles,<sup>43</sup> who has simply kept them. Please look into it in Paris.

## 129. [To his father, in Palermo]<sup>44</sup>

*Eugene did not become a priest for any other reasons than to make reparation for his sins, devote himself to the service of the persecuted Church and the salvation of souls.*

L.J.C.

Aix, December 7, 1814

... But here, I do not know how, a thought comes up that I must share with you; I had forgotten it up to now, but it hurt me at the time. When Mrs. de Ver[ac] passed through Marseilles, she showed me the copy of the letter you wrote to Mr. de Blacas at the end of which were some notes for his

<sup>43</sup> Father Charles Breteni re (1770-1845), superior of the Fathers of "la Retraite" in Aix.

<sup>44</sup> Orig.: Aix, Biblioth que M janes. In the omitted paragraphs, Eugene says that he is not receiving any letters from the Paris friends concerning pensions for the Mazenods, and gives news of Aix.

particular instruction. I have a copy of these sections. In these notes, there was a reference to myself from which one might have concluded that I entered the clerical state only for the basest reasons and ones really unworthy of my character. In all truth, never was there a vocation more free of self-interest than mine. It is not because I had had such little success as my mother in restoring her fortunes that I forsook the world; I could have had, through a number of highly advantageous marriages, the wherewithal to console myself with for a loss that after all was not so very considerable. The idea that my sister would have a better marriage, etc., did not even enter my head either. I did not have to make the least shadow of a sacrifice for her to obtain that advantage. I renounced no right, made no promise, and did not do anything at all to merit the praises that Vintimille and his sister sang in this matter and which were in fact so many atrocious insults which had me secretly smarting. I devoted myself to the Church because she was suffering persecution, was abandoned, because, after 25 years, she could no longer confide the divine ministry, which before had been sought after by the highest in the land, to any but poor workers, wretched peasants, because, seeing us heading pell mell towards a schism that I believed was inevitable, I feared it would find but few generous souls with the capacity to sacrifice their comfort and even their lives to preserve the integrity of the faith, and because it seemed to me that God would give me strength enough to dare to brave all these dangers. I was so persuaded that it would not be long before we experienced a cruel persecution, that on leaving for the Paris seminary I packed a complete set of lay clothes with the idea that I would have to use them as a priest. Here you have the motives that moved me, there are no others, no others can even be conceivable given the character God has been pleased to favour me with ...

I will not leave the capitular chamber without telling you that I did not take seriously what you indicated as to my uncle and myself, namely as to the canonry.<sup>45</sup> He is the person in the diocese with the most right to that place, and I am the last person who will be in anyone's thoughts.

<sup>45</sup> The President had written in his letter of August 27 - September 28, 1814: "You make me laugh when you say that Father Fortuné is letting slip the opportunity of having a canonry, as if it were natural to believe that one would think of an old priest who had disappeared from the scene some time ago, while thought of a deserving young man who has given proof of his value and is on the spot would not enter into consideration. You are the one to whom it should already have gone. It is not that if one named your uncle to the junior canonry in a chapter in which he has exercised one of the first dignities he would turn it down, although it would be like telling a bishop to become a miller, but he would desire much more that justice be done to yourself ..."

Everything supports the first part of my assertion. I would not be saying what I think if I said the same about myself. But that is inevitable in a country, or rather in a town where birth, devotion, disinterestedness and a lot of other things besides count for nothing. I sometimes tell myself that if I held different principles and instead of being for conscientious reasons irrevocably decided on never asking for anything, anything at all, for myself and as I believe I could have, like so many others, embarked on enterprises that would bring me where many another would not even dream of aspiring, I would see a crowd of people, who weary me a little, come crawling to my feet, etc. However, as I said, I entered the clerical state only to try to make reparation for my sins by doing a little good, working for the salvation of souls. If I had sought honours, I would not have looked for them in the Church especially at a time its only prospect was the gibbet. ...<sup>46</sup>

### 130. Retreat made in the Aix seminary, December 1814.<sup>47</sup>

*His need for a retreat. Too much activity and not enough prayer. Lapses in his rule governing how he is to spend his days. 1st day: man's end, lack of purity of intention and self-love. Tendency to perfection, Good Friday recalled. 2nd day: sin. Spiritual joys during his illness. 3rd day: death-beds of the bad and good priests. Hell. 4th day: penance. God's mercy. 5th day: spiritual guide. 6th day: J.C.'s virtues: humility, poverty, mortification, abandonment to God's will, obedience. 7th day: imitation of J.C. in his public life.*

December 1814

How badly I needed this retreat! I seem to have forgotten this maxim of the author of the Imitation.

<sup>46</sup> As to Eugene's vocation, the President replies on February 22, 1815: "And since I have spoken of your ministry I think that this is the place to reply to what you indicated to me concerning your vocation. I can truthfully say that when I learned indirectly that you had embraced the clerical state, I did not feel regrets over either the satisfaction of seeing you reproduce our race, or the advantages that I would have derived from a brilliant marriage you could have aspired to and would undoubtedly have obtained. But on the one hand I was mortified that you had not consulted me on such an important topic, and on the other hand the schismatic state in which France was placed at that time made me very fearful. Even so, I did not reveal any of this to you, and placing all my trust in God's infinite goodness, I never ceased to thank him for the resolution he had inspired you with and I renew this even more especially since you have disclosed to me the sublime motives for your decision. I hope this explanation will suffice to calm your bad temper over certain hasty words that slipped out in my private memoir for the countess ..."

<sup>47</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post.: DM IV-2. In the margin on page one Eugene writes: "I used this year Father Neveu's retreat." He is referring to the work of Father François

It is evident to me that in working for others, I have been too forgetful of myself. This retreat will be particularly aimed at making good the resulting harm to my soul and at taking wise measures to avoid this abuse in the future. The prisoners of war, the illness they gave me, the foundation, the promotion of the youth congregation, all have played their part this year to take me abroad, and the cares that these works have necessarily entailed, the difficulties that had to be overcome, the obstacles, the oppositions that it has been necessary to combat have been the reason that I have quite lost the interior spirit, so that I have often acted on the purely human level, and very imperfectly at that. Instead of reposing all my trust in prayer for the success of the good I wanted to do, how many times have I not had recourse to other weapons? My self-love, wounded when I met [p. 2] with obstacles, didn't it lead me to commit many faults, — grumbling, poking fun, showing contempt towards people who doubtless were in the wrong for not supporting me but even so were deserving of respect on account of their priestly character.

In future I must place my trust ever more in the virtue of prayer than in the activity I am trying to accomplish to bring success to the works entrusted to me or that God in his goodness is inspiring me to do. It would be foolishness to do nothing, I even think when reflecting how the Saints acted that one must give generously of oneself, but at the same time it would be less wise not to make of prayer, intercession of the Saints, the Just, the Angels, but especially of the B. Virgin, one's principal resource. It would be a disorder to lose peace of soul, to respond in a purely human way when things don't go my way, etc.

Important maxim. Always do all that depends on me for success in the undertakings I believe good, but when I have done everything I can, when I have turned to both God and men, when I have made use of all the means that faith and my mind and position provide me with, if the outcome does not come up to my expectations, re-enter as soon as possible into my

Nepveu, S.J.: *Retraite selon l'esprit et la methode de saint Ignace pour les ecclésiastiques*. We still have the copy used by the Founder, the 1749 edition.

Eugene follows closely the themes of the meditations (three per day), the considerations and readings for each day, but he writes down especially his own reflections. We omit only the list of extracts from Scripture, the Imitation, and spiritual works that he copies out daily as found in Father Nepveu's retreat.



inner-self and not lose one ounce of that precious peace which is the greatest [p. 3] of goods. St. Ignatius used to say that a quarter of an hour's prayer would suffice to reconcile him even to the destruction of his Society.

Once more in this retreat I shall have to lay down an iron rule for my use of time. I acknowledge that I have let myself wander too easily from the order I laid down for myself. No one will deny that it is good to be always ready to serve one's neighbour, but this year this service has been a veritable slavery, and I am much to blame for it. Complacency pushed too far degenerates into weakness, and its consequences are unfortunate in the extreme, as they end up leading one into time-wasting.

I must fix for myself a rule of conduct with my young people. Work on the virtue of gentleness, on mortification in the use of my tongue when I am crossed, on humility, self-love, etc., hunt it down precisely when it conceals itself, retrieve myself by prayer, office, mass, preparation, thanksgiving, reading Holy Scripture, pious reading, the examen, in a word leave no stone unturned, for I need reformation in everything [p. 4].

### **First day: man's end.**

*First meditation:* for what end was man created? First point: to serve God. Second point: to save oneself.

I meditated on man's end. Passably well. I stayed most with the following thoughts: that God created me, and indeed could only have created me for himself, that he fashioned me according to his designs to make use of me in what he knew would contribute to his Glory and procure my salvation. While as for me, until the time of my conversion, my sole preoccupation was to destroy his work, and in this I was only too successful. Thus I went against all his plans, by my fault; I had even rendered the attainment of some of them an impossibility for the future. If I am to believe what my Teachers tell me, I was quite talented, and if I had wanted I might have become a very accomplished person; I did not so wish and I shall never be more than a mediocrity. May God pardon the consequences of this fault that persisted right through my youth and will survive in its effects throughout my lifetime and after. Since my conversion there has been, it is true, a certain change, but I have nothing to be complacent about in my actions; how far I am indeed from bringing to them the purity of intention God demands. I am not yet, — indeed, far from it, — immersed in God. Always I find self where I should count for naught. I strip my Master, but alas, my petty larcenies, far from enriching me, impoverish me, the gold as

it passes through my hands ends up in smoke, or rather worse still, I am left with nothing but filth.

That perhaps is what my treasure amounts to. These good works, these striking works for which men praise me, exalt me to the skies, these works which, if done solely for God, etc., would be in fact highly meritorious, coin of good alloy to exchange in expiation for and wipe out my numerous, enormous sins, these works, by the sole fact that in one way [p. 5] or another I want to attribute to myself a share of their glory, come perhaps to nothing, and that always supposing that they were begun for fitting motives and that self-love was not their chief motivation, for if I did not act for him and through him, these works despite all appearances were but sins. Good God! to whom indeed alone belong honour and glory, do not permit this disorder. I am the least of your slaves, I say this with conviction, nothing is due me but opprobrium, henceforth I wish to act only for you, solely for you. I would simply be my own worst enemy were I to think otherwise. What I will pay particular attention to will be never to say anything that might make me well-thought of, tempt me to attribute to myself some part of that glory that belongs to you.

I must garner for eternity, perhaps while people think me rich I still have nothing; it is high time I pressed on. Death may surprise me in this totally denuded state, and then what will be my lot? Wretch that I am! Can I be blind to the fact that the balance is tilted towards my sins, am I never to put some counterweight on the other side?

Compliments coming from women or people leave me unaffected, I even find them tiresome. The reason is that they give them to all and sundry and without discernment.

I pay little heed either to those of libertines, etc., as they are superficial, insincere, etc. This could well be a consequence of my pride. I must strive to be as indifferent to those coming from basically sound people as to those from silly women, etc. I would have made great strides if I got to that point.

*Second meditation:* reasons that oblige us to tend to our last end and means that can help us to arrive at it.

First point: reasons that oblige us to tend to our last end. Second point: means that can help us to arrive at it.

It is a matter of my happiness, my glory, it is a kind of necessity for me, says Father Neveu.

I looked for happiness outside of God and for too long with resulting unhappiness. How often in my past life had my wounded, tormented heart taken wings for God from whom it had turned away! Can I forget the bitter tears that the sight of the cross brought streaming from my eyes one Good Friday? Indeed they welled up from the heart, there was no checking them, they were too abundant for me to be able to hide them from those who like myself were assisting at that moving ceremony. I was in a state of mortal sin [p. 6] and it was precisely this that made me grieve. I could then, and also on some other instance, perceive the difference. Never was my soul more satisfied, never did it feel such happiness; for in the midst of this flood of tears, despite my grief, or rather through my grief, my soul took wings for its last end, towards God its only good whose loss it felt so keenly. Why say more? Could I ever express what I experienced then? Just the memory of it fills my heart with a sweet satisfaction. So I had looked for happiness outside of God, and outside him I found but affliction and chagrin. Blessed, a thousand times blessed, that he, this good Father, notwithstanding my unworthiness, lavished on me all the richness of his mercy. Let me at least make up for lost time by redoubling my love for him. May all my actions, thoughts, etc., be directed to that end. What more glorious occupation than to act in everything and for everything only for God, to love him above all else, to love him all the more as one who has loved him too late. Ah! this is to begin already here below the blessed life of heaven. That is the true way to glorify him as he wants. Woe to those who would sooner glorify His Justice by giving him reason to exercise it on them. Fools that they are, they refuse to glorify his mercy to their great advantage, and God who has no need of them, after exhausting all the resources of his charity, hands them over to his Justice. Come now! what is man that he dare take it on himself to withdraw from the power of the Eternal? No, no, he will be our Judge or our Father. The choice is ours!

[p. 7] God has done everything to bring us back to Him, our last end, man does everything to prostitute everything, by misdirecting everything for guilty ends. This thought would lead me too far afield, it was the subject of my mediation.

I considered that not only what is outside of me was made to lead me to him, but I reflected too on the fact that he has directly and personally granted me this same end. Immense generosity on one side, incredible abuse on the other.

This thought of Father Neveu stayed with me, that there is not a single creature which, taken in itself, does not furnish man with a reason for

knowing God, a motive for loving him, and a means for serving him. Original sin upset this beautiful order, turned it upside-down. To re-establish it we must totally cut off everything that hinders us from tending to our end, everything that is criminal. We must detach our heart from what may detach us from our end, i.e., from everything dangerous, however agreeable it may be.

Finally, we must embrace everything that brings us to our end however tiresome it may be.

And as to things indifferent in themselves, adds Father Neveu, like rest and health, we must employ them for our salvation since they are means and means are good only in so far as they serve to the acquisition of the end. There we have the abridgement of all Christian prudence and what should be the rule of our conduct.

*Third meditation:* the end of the clerical state.

First point: what is the end of the clerical state? Second point: means that might help in reaching it.

So much to think about! 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, see me now a minister of that same God, [p. 8] the depositary of his graces, the co-adjutor of Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and men. Who brought this prodigy about, to my constant astonishment, confusion? Once again it is the infinite mercy of my God. Ah, here we have to exclaim that he has taken for his use some mud, worse than that — vile excrement to accomplish a great work. I went back over in my meditation all the reasons that should have excluded me for ever from the sublime priesthood, I acknowledged that there is no man who merits less than I this honour, this favour beyond price. My place was certainly not in the sanctuary, even all the less might I expect ever to go up to the altar. Outside the church, with the dogs, in the outermost row of penitents; this was as far as my ambition could stretch.

I am a priest, but am I fooling myself? Am I not the one who lived in mortal sin, persevered in that dreadful state and never dreamt of leaving it, or to speak more plainly did not really want to leave it, and that for how long? Alas, yes, it is I. That dread memory will ever be as present with me as that of his benefactions, mercies, tenderness, my God's love of predilection for a monster of ingratitude (and I have noted before that I have never

shown ingratitude ever except in God's regard). But since it is priest I am, oh! I feel, oh yes! I feel all that this word signifies, so that I cannot utter it without emotion. 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? Yes, but have I drawn the practical consequences? Feebly. Why? Because I am a lazy, tepid fellow, because I do not do more but even less than people who have no guilt to expiate. But everyone [p. 9] exclaims on the fact that I do too much. That is because no one really understands the extent of the duties of my state. Once again it is a state of perfection; it is not enough to do what has to be done, with "what has to be done" souls will be lost, and if by doing more than what had to be done I could have saved them who is God going to call to account for this loss? Me! Have I really grasped this?

But to work for the salvation of souls, I must be holy, very holy: 1. because without that it would be of no avail to try to convert anyone. How can one give what one has not got? It is from one's superabundance that one must give; 2. a mediocre virtue would not survive in the atmosphere of the world, even when one lives there with a life-style like mine. It is absolutely necessary that the brilliance of the priest's virtues be so bright as to dissipate all the pollution that rises up around him, as to pierce the densest of clouds. Isn't that precisely what I told myself when I entered the clerical state, as I drew near to this priesthood that I should have considered only from afar and very afar? So don't let us forget it. Let us make use of every means God gives us to reach this end of the priesthood, perfection.

(Today's consideration is on mental prayer)

[Reading to be done ...]

**Second Day: sin or sins that are obstacles to arriving at the final end.**

*Fourth meditation:* sin in its effects or the punishment of the Angels.

First point: the Angels' sin. Second point: priests' sins compared with the Angels' sin.

The Angels turned away from their end through their self-complacency. They were condemned. So what is sin that a single one had so terrible an effect? Thousands perhaps of Angels were cast into the eternal flames. If God had mercy on them, what glory for his name through the acts of adoration, praise [p. 10] they would have rendered without ceasing to His Sovereign Majesty for all eternity. So what is sin when God is more glorified by the punishment of the guilty than he would have been by their

repentance. As the Son of God did not will to expiate it (this unfathomable favour was reserved for man) nothing could efface it, it must needs be punished, and how? When is it that we shall look favorably on this point?

If God did not spare the Angels, what should we not fear for ourselves from his justice with our millions of sins, committed in spite of the Saviour's grace, in the midst of the streams of blood he poured out to save us; and after the example of the severity towards the Angels guilty of but one sin.

A priest's sins, Father Neveu points out, contain within them the entire matter of the Angels' sins: 1. Sins committed with full knowledge, and in spite of spiritual lights, etc. 2. Sins accompanied by the blackest ingratitude in the light of benefits received, etc. 3. Sins with a dimension of scandal that seduce others, etc. 4. Finally obstinacy in sin, obduracy commonly found with priest sinners, an almost inevitable consequence of their position that, etc.

Is there then any comfort for me in the thought that I can flatter myself that since I became a priest, and even before, I have carefully abstained, with God's grace, from mortal sin. I believe so, I hope so, I have this sweet trust, but am I quite sure the great Scrutator of hearts thinks as I do? This thought terrifies me, it could be the case that while I believe I am justified, I am not; good God, I cannot bear this thought. Keep me from such an unhappy fate that I fear a thousand times more than death.

Let us dig deep, search my heart, let us weigh, scrutinize, prune, [p. 11] purify, sanctify, divinize everything.

*Fifth meditation:* our own sins.

First point: the number and quality of our sins. Second point: the gravity of our sins.

The aim of this meditation is to enter into ourselves, to have a thorough knowledge of ourselves, and see what is most likely to lead us astray.

This meditation being a kind of examen, I took note in the examen of the result of my reflection. After presenting myself as a criminal at the feet of His Divine Majesty, I went over my thoughts, words, desires, repugnances, inclinations, in a word all I do in the course of the day and my life.

My duties towards God, neighbour, myself. The good omitted or done negligently, or done badly, etc.

What wretchedness, imperfections, how much futility, how many things to correct, purge, rectify.

Father Neveu's reflections in this meditation helped me, although, in the whole of my pitiable behaviour in the course of the year, I have laid bare only a state of languor, wretchedness, extreme sickness and not precisely one of death, yet everything he said can more or less be applied to my position, for does one need to have committed mortal sin to be horrified at the infidelity of a creature who serves his Creator much worse than one serves an earthly Prince, who constantly gives offense if not with the most execrable of crimes, mortal sin, at least with an endless succession of petty offenses that must needs make his soul very disagreeable to God. As well as that, one's past life, ah one's past life would furnish everlasting food for shame, to the point even of despair were not the Lord the most merciful and best of fathers [p. 12].

*Sixth meditation:* obstacles that turn us away from our end, or venial sin.

First point: venial sin regarded in itself. Second point: venial sin regarded in its effects.

How much I need to consider that the least venial sin is a greater evil than every worldly evil as, be it ever so trivial, it remains always God who is offended, an evil for God, it is an insult to God's Sovereign Majesty, an ingratitude towards his infinite goodness, an unworthy abuse of his Omnipotence, a resistance to his all-holy Will, a diminution of his glory. It would consequently be better were the whole universe to be destroyed than to commit the least venial sin, etc.

To gauge the effect it must have on God, I have but to examine the effect had on me, a wicked creature full of imperfections and faults, quite unworthy of love, etc., I do not say of a premeditated insult from someone towards whom I have demonstrated concern, to whose good I have tried to contribute, whom in short I love, but of a simple failure of attention which brings home a certain indifference, etc. I feel a coldness in my heart towards him, a lessening of my concern, it is already a lot if I do not dwell on some means of meting out some punishment by some reproach or an equal show of indifference to that he has shown me.

The effects of venial sin have made themselves only too felt this year. With the exception of 3 or 4 times when it pleased God not to deal harshly with me, what has my experience been? Often a kind of spiritual lassitude,

aversion, torpor that showed me my poor soul was sick, languishing. How did my prayers go, did I not knock in vain on the Spouse's door? What lights did I get from them, what sweetness, what consolations did I experience in them? What facility did I have in the fulfillment of my duties, etc. Was it just, could I claim that the Lord should mete me out any other treatment than as an unprofitable servant, insolent, inattentive, etc.? Since I know the reason for these coldnesses of the Spouse why not put it right? [p. 13] It seems that this lovable Saviour wished, even this year, to show me extraordinary favours on some occasions only to arouse me to serve him better in attracting me by these ineffable consolations. Mass of 20 April, could I ever forget you? If I saw someone rise from the dead, could it make a deeper impression on me? And communion on Holy Thursday during my convalescence, and those other communions made also in bed with that abundance of graces, where love, thanksgiving, compunction so deliciously filled my soul. And that reading that was done for me on Palm Sunday, of the Passion of our good, excellent, excessively excellent Master, did it leave no trace in my heart? It did, it did, and it will be an eternal reproach to me that I deprived myself through my fault of the continuance of these benefactions, these ineffable delights. My soul, come back to fervour. May this retreat by laying bare your wretched problems arouse you to put them to rights, do not leave this solitude before you have taken steps guaranteed to bring about perseverance in your resolutions, that the resilience God will without doubt give to your heart may not dissipate on its first contact with the world, in the midst of which however you must needs live for its building up, sanctification, salvation without doing harm to yourself at the same time. Your eternal destiny is at stake, your happiness even here below, since you know that nothing is costly, all seems easy to a soul visited by these consolations of its divine Spouse and that never will this light illumine, this fire give warmth, embrace a heart clogged with the fumes of venial sin, that host of tiny reptiles that consume all the soul's substance, if I may so express it, and reduce it to dryness and even lay it open to perish.

[p. 14] (The second day's consideration is on the divine office.)

[Readings ...]

**Third day: calamities befalling those who depart from their end.**

*Seventh meditation: death.*

First point: death looked at with respect to this life. Second point: death looked at with respect to the next life.



First prelude. Imagine one is on one's death-bed, and that someone is recommending my soul to God.

Second prelude. Ask God the grace of having so clear a view of the consequence of that moment on which eternity depends, that I may take measures to prepare myself for it.

If I had died last March when illness brought me to the portals of the grave, I would no longer count for anything. Not a single one of those people who speak to me, demonstrate their esteem and even affection, not a single one would give me a thought. Even my most intimate friends to bring my name to their lips would need an outside influence to remind them of my existence. And we are now in December, namely it would be only nine months since I was no more. ... Indeed, it would not even take that long to wipe away the least trace of memory of my existence. The next day but one after my burial, I am perhaps too generous, I would have been forgotten. It would have been the very same day had there not been for the unusual interest that my illness aroused in people; so it is because of that unusual factor that I say "the next day but one." They would have done all kinds of foolish things on the day of my burial and while I do not know myself what would have become of my soul, they would have looked on my body as that of a saint, but soon putrefaction and vermin doing justice to this pile of dust, the instrument of so many sins, before ever it had been entirely consumed by the *worms*, or the ghastly stench issuing from this abominable sewer [p. 15] had been totally given off, they would have been dancing on my grave. So, what does my heart tell me in face of these just, indubitable thoughts? Does it bear up under the thought of this general oblivion, how does it react to the thought that those it loves most will forget it like the others with hardly a few days difference? Yes, yes, heart too sensitive, too loving, you will be completely forgotten even by those you love so tenderly. That much is certain.

The conclusions to be drawn, says Father Neveu, from the thought of death are that one must absolutely separate oneself from things to which we cannot be attached without sin or a great danger of sin, as it is reasonable to give God, and gain a lot of merit, what will have to be given at death without any merit.

After a careful self-examination I do not seem to discover in myself these kinds of attachments. However, I think I must keep an eye on my over-loving, over-tender, over-affectionate, over-sensitive heart, not that it is at all set on illicit objects, — I keep if anything too much distance from

persons of the opposite sex to make major reflections necessary on my strictly indispensable, cool and serious relations with them; but it is my friends I love too much, it is to friendship, tenderness to which I attach, it seems to me, too much value.

Father Neveu's second conclusion is that one must detach oneself even from things one can possess without irregularity. There is more merit in doing this and greater facility. There would be besides another disadvantage in waiting for death to separate us from them, namely that this matter would occupy our heart and mind too much, and deprive us perhaps of the time and thought of preparing ourselves for death as we ought. [p. 16] The way to die one day without anguish, is to die each day by each day detaching oneself from something, *Quotidie morior* [I Cor. 15:31].

Second point: death is a passage to a blessed eternity if we are in a state of grace, infinitely wretched if we are in our sins. The tree remains where it falls. There is no dying twice. The most important business we have, the one business is to make a good death. And since our eternity hangs on the moment of death, we must bend all our efforts to be found in a good state of grace at that moment. I cannot merit that grace, but I must have confidence that the Lord will give it me. If I make a beginning by being faithful to these first graces that help me to lead a Christian and fervent life, I must expect no less of the merits and death of my Saviour for me.

These reflections are all taken from Father Neveu; I do not have the time today to write down those I might have added in my meditation.

*Eighth meditation:* the different dispositions of either a lax or irregular priest and a fervent and regular priest when they must die and appear before God at the particular judgment.

First point: the dispositions of a lax and irregular priest at the hour of death. Second point: on the dispositions of a regular and fervent priest at the hour of death.

Let us leave aside, it is my earnest desire, in this meditation everything that concerns only the priest who is evidently irregular; although it might be useful to consider him to avoid falling into his deplorable state. Let us not lay stress on the despair of this dying priest at the moment of giving an account for an infinity of sacrileges, abominations, etc. Even so however despair might well be something the lax priest too may have cause to fear; his remorse, dread, confusion might well cast him into this final abyss. Let

us take a look at least at this remorse, dread, confusion that await him on his death-bed. How could he fail to be given over to these various feelings, when it is no longer possible for him to deceive himself about his obligations, his duties. No longer can he have recourse to those lax decisions of a conscience hardened by self-love, sloth, human respect, etc. No, the lines drawn so arbitrarily between strict duty and what one could dispense oneself from doing, between precept and counsel, these lines will vanish, and the wretch will find himself lost, astray in the immense arena of duty. Then he will know that a priest has more obligations than he had wished to persuade himself of, and he will see that his ignorance was voluntary, culpable, the reasons that had seduced him on specious motives, that he was in bad faith, that he was deceiving himself. [p. 17] He had blinded himself to the point of believing that he was simply imperfect and now behold! in the light of the blessed candle which brings him to see the door of eternity ready to open and swallow him up, he discovers that he was culpable and very culpable. He understands that those special graces which reproached him with his lukewarmness were not given for him to trample on, the parable he many a time read without understanding unfolds its meaning to his eyes, that was the talent that must not be buried, much less scorned. What will his answer be to that dread Master who would reap where he has not sown? These graces would have sufficed perhaps to convert an entire city, and they have not made of him a good priest, not even a good Christian.

And those neglected means of salvation. Those sacraments received and administered. What fruit the saints drew from them, and you, what use have you made of them? That holy word you preached, how many fine truths have you proclaimed during your ministry? You would urge sinners to come back to God, etc. You were inexhaustible on the counsels you refused to no one on the way one should approach the sacraments so as to go to them fruitfully, etc. At the hour of death you will remember you spoke well, gave good advice, etc., but how will you make your excuses for not having practiced what you knew well enough to say to others? ...

But that sacrifice you used to offer every day. Ah! you will come to understand that, called to intimate converse with your Saviour concerning the interests of your soul, you might have made of him a Judge, I am bold to say, less terrible, but having abused so signal a favour, having day by day pierced his heart that he opened to you to be warmed, nourished, vivified there, having been cruelly outraged by your indifference, your mechanical worship, that spouse whom love placed in your power, this God emptied

for you, etc., he can be naught else for you than the terrible God, the severe God, the God before whom must tremble the heavens, the earth, the whole universe.

A mass unprepared, without devotion, attention, respect, with senses dissipated, a heart preoccupied and perhaps not sufficiently pure. One mass said like that, a hundred masses, a thousand masses, as many masses as there are days in his life, oh! when death comes it is more than a matter for confusion, remorse, dread. Much less is needed to fall into despair. Then there is no more illusion, one will judge as God judges [p. 18] the good he has not done or has not procured. Let us meditate on this saying of St. Gregory: *prout crescunt dona augentur rationes donorum*, and on this thought of Father Neveu that "*a priest should do all the good he can; his duty therein has no other limits than his power.*" It is on this rule that we shall be judged.

Unfaithful and prevaricating ministers, you were installed only to extend the Kingdom of J.C., to procure his glory which consists in making him known and loved, and you believe you have done enough as long as there remains a soul to save? At the time of death, at the time of death you will think quite differently, all those souls who have perished for want of the efforts that you owed them will come like so many hideous ghosts to reproach you with their loss. What to reply? Indeed, my soul, had you not been in a state of delirium during my illness, are you quite sure that none of these terrifying reflections would not have come home to you? Could you promise yourself to appear without fear and remorse before your judge? Would that moment of passage have filled you with joy, or had you terrified with fright? I would die as a victim of charity, that would be the verdict of ordinary people, but these people were not your judge. What would have been the verdict of the scrutator of hearts? That zeal that had brought me to the portals of the grave, was it really pure, really disinterested, I would have liked to believe this myself when I was healthy, but there, at the moment of the mighty manifestation, would I have withstood the test? Did I attribute to myself none of the glory that was due to God for my devotedness? Those praises that were quite undeserved by the slave who acted only because it was his Master's will, who acted only in his Master's name, who acted only with his Master's help, with the strength, the grace of his Master, did not those praises flatter your pride, even while you refused them? Did not the perfume of that dangerous incense afford some little satisfaction to your self-love? Did you do nothing to draw on yourself these plaudits? I do not know the answer now; but at the moment of death we would have known.

Here I call a halt, as I cannot write everything down, but I am quite tempted to believe that the greatest grace the Lord has done for me is to give me the time to do penance again, to make this retreat, and that he treated me like a spoilt child when at the time of my illness he made it impossible for me to know the danger I was in of dying. Let us profit, my soul, let us profit from the time; I am not, far from it, as I would like to be at the moment of death. With regard to my obligations, it is not the people, not even the clerical body who are to be looked to, it is your model, the Prince of Pastors, those saints who have most nearly attained it. My God, give me the grace never to lose sight of them and to base my conduct solely on theirs; let us settle this in the course of this retreat. When that is done, death may come, well and good, I will die then like a regular priest who can count with confidence on his Saviour's mercy.

To work, without delay. Let us make a beginning, for up to now I have done nothing that counts. [p. 19].

*Ninth meditation:* on hell.

First point: the qualities of the pains of hell. Second point: reflections on this subject.

First prelude: imagine a subterranean cavern, all filled with fire. The damned who are plunged in it are quite penetrated by this fire. You hear their cries, howls, blasphemies.

Second prelude: ask God to bring me to such a grasp of the extent of these pains that I may make a very strong resolution to do everything to avoid them.

[Readings ...]

[p. 21] **Fourth day: the soul's return to God through penance.**

*Tenth meditation:* the necessity of doing penance to return to God.

The subject of the meditation: parable of the head of the household who commands the cutting down of the fig tree that was bearing no fruit, St. Luke, Ch. 13.

First prelude: let the parable pervade one's mind.

Second prelude: ask God for penetration of its meaning and profit from it.

(I should have thoroughly grasped the obligation I have to tend continually to God as my last end. I have looked at the obstacles that have turned me from it up to now, and I have come to know the wretchedness

and unhappy consequences of my trespasses. I should after that be touched with the desire to return sincerely to God; and I can only do it through penance; this will be the task of this fourth day.)

I was a tree damaged by original sin. The head of the household could have had it cut down and thrown it in the fire. He preferred to transplant it into good soil for it to bear good fruit. Such was the effect of baptism. How many other damaged trees like me have not found similar treatment. Hell is fed in part with this rejected wood. What right had I to be an exception? Turks, pagans, infidels of every sort await me at the judgment. It is for me to so conduct myself that they have no room to reproach me that in my place, as favoured as I was, they would have profited better from so signal a favour.

As to that, might they not even now have cited me before God's tribunal? Transplanted into the blessed soil bedewed by the blood of Jesus Christ, enriched with his very substance, etc., what fruit did I produce? Great God! would I have been found sterile? Would I have produced nothing but leaves? Sterile: heaven forbid; but the sentence against the tree in the Gospel was passed because it had produced no fruit! Would to God again that I had been sterile, at least I would have been condemned only for not doing good. But transplanted into this fertile soil, amidst these plants covered, loaded down with the fruits of holiness, to perish on the vine, produce rotten, contagious, pestilential fruit, ah, that is the limit in horror, abomination! Even so that is all I could do. Was I cut down, thrown on the fire? ... no: who would have believed it. I have been transplanted afresh into the most precious, choice part, that on which the benign influence of the Sun of Justice most makes itself felt, and that even before I had borne any fruit, in the sole hope of bearing it in the future; yes even though those who like me had produced nothing, those indeed who were less culpable than I because they had been less cared for, have remained forgotten and await in their state of death only for the axe to fall on the only root that holds them still to this earth whose beneficent influence they no longer enjoy, and precipitate them into the flames; myself by [p. 22] I know not what love of purely gratuitous predilection of the head of the household, to such an extent have I been favoured.

Well, surely this time I will have compensated the head of the household for his long wait, his hopes so greatly and so often deceived? Alas, no! The tree still yields nothing; or at least if it produces something, it is wild fruit. The deadly blight that threatened it was destroyed, I hope, but it seems that it has exhausted its strength in expelling this poison, etc. It gives

forth a large number of leaves, has beautiful bark, but the fruit is still not worth a lot. A lot of show, little in reality; outward beauty, substance still vitiated.

So what will the head of the household say when he visits afresh his field, when he examines his crops? Woe is me this time if they have not changed substantially, *cui multum datum est multum quaeritur ab illo*. You powerful intercessors who have stayed the arm of the head of the household, my holy patrons, my guardian angel and you Blessed Virgin, continue to give me your protection, obtain from the Sovereign Mediator that by virtue of his merits, I may become fertile in good works, now at least that, admitted into the sanctuary, my culpable sterility would do harm not only to my soul, but to the whole Church, etc.

*Eleventh meditation:* that penance is necessary not only for great sinners, but also for lukewarm souls.

First point: the danger a lukewarm soul runs if it does not do penance. Second point: signs of lukewarmness.

First prelude: imagine that O.L. says to you these words of the Apocalypse: Would to God you were cold or hot; but since you are lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth [Apoc. 3:16].

Second prelude: ask God to grasp the force of these words, so as to quit this state as soon as possible.

This saying seems inconceivable; even so it is full of truth. I paused in my meditation to weigh the reasons that should convince me of the exactitude of this proposition. It would take too long to recall them here: I will simply cite those brought up by Father Neveu: 1. It is a state of blindness brought about by the passions, dissipation, the multitude of venial sins, withdrawal from heavenly lights. This blindness is the reason one forms a false conscience in whose shade a soul reclines, for years at a time, in a weight of sins that passion hides from it or disguises. It lives tranquil in the midst of every failing, making excuses for what God will judge with great severity. 2. Souls whom God destines for a lofty state should not limit themselves to a mediocre virtue. This is what O.L. brought home to the Apostles when they argue about who is the greater. [p. 23] By opposing God's designs, the ways of mercy are changed to justice and rigour.

3. The state of lukewarmness is without remedy in a certain sense: 1. because the sins committed by a lukewarm soul easily escape the examination of a not-so-delicate conscience. So not recognizing the extent of its

sickness, it does little to remedy it. Whereas a great sinner easily recognizes his disorders and is more readily touched. 2. because lukewarmness renders every remedy useless. The verities, by dint of being repeated, no longer have an effect on a lukewarm soul.

As to the signs of lukewarmness, these are the effects that it produces in a soul: 1. great ease in omitting one's spiritual exercises and duties of piety. The least pretext affords a powerful reason to a lukewarm soul to excuse itself; 2. continual mental dissipation with practically no attention paid either to self or to God and which busies itself only with trifles; 3. a habit of doing what it does with no interiority, but by rote, routine, etc.; 4. laziness in acquiring the virtues proper to its state; 5. an aversion from spiritual things; 6. insensitivity of conscience in all small matters.

It is on this topic that reformation must focus. Except for the last item, all else applies to me. 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. Is it going to be the same this time as with the others? Yes, if I do not take better precautions to persevere in my good intentions. The sense of the loss that I have experienced will make me, I hope, more attentive. It must be agreed too that my readiness to be of service to others is being misused. I think that it is this dissipation in activities, etc., that does harm to the spirit of interiority. The proof of this is that when I can spend a day of solitude, alone by myself, there is an improvement in that area. So it will be vitally necessary to regulate very severely for the future my relations with my neighbour, and to foresee how I ought to go about it, when my duty demands that I serve him, so as not to let my spirit evaporate. This much is certain, that precisely is the principal cause. This neighbour whom 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. [p. 24]

*Twelfth meditation:* God's mercy and goodness in seeking out the sinner, and receiving him in penance, as a motive for contrition or perfect penitence.



First point: of God's goodness in seeking out the sinful soul. Second point: God's goodness in receiving the sinner, unmistakable in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Nothing can better convey a greater idea of the excellence of my soul than God's way of dealing with it. Man can only blame his own ignorance if he does not know its full value. That it was formed by God himself is already a lot, but that after having merited its disgrace, this same God who should have punished it, did not think it too humiliating for His sovereign Majesty to empty himself in some way to save it, this precisely is what is utterly incomprehensible in my eyes, precisely what gives me an infinitely greater idea of my soul than I can express. And that is still not all, for not content with having by his incarnation discharged men's debt, he reduces himself, a prodigy indeed, he reduces himself to beseeching men to profit from his benefactions, to apply to themselves the merits. There would be matter here for meditation for a thousand years, eternity will not suffice to plumb the depths of this mystery of goodness ... and to give thanks for it worthily to the Lord.

And it is this soul, for which the Son of God has done and still does every day things so far beyond our power to conceive, that we expose to loss notwithstanding all these helps, it is this soul that worldlings would sacrifice for a moment's pleasure, for a smart saying, out of a vain, absurd human respect, it is this soul which I myself held so little in regard in my past life, that I sold, handed over, prostituted for nothing, this soul which today again, illuminated now by the lights of faith, etc., I should esteem the more, I am so far, but so far from appreciating at its just value, that I spoil, impoverish, wound, exhaust by my numerous infidelities. What madness!

My soul, o my soul, are you a stranger to me? Are you not mine? If you had stayed beneath the anathema, would it not have been I who was condemned? Ah! Why is it that what the divine Saviour has done for you does not excite my zeal, my esteem, my attention? I take up that thought again, my [p. 25] Saviour gives me the measure of what it is worth, by what he has done for it. It is he who ransomed it, he who first sought it, and although the loss of every single person would diminish nothing of his glory or grandeur or ineffable happiness, he still searches for my soul with that same urgency as if he could not be happy without it, and that urgency does not lead him to act as Master as he could, no it is by no means by force, it is by sweetness, justice, condescension that he wishes to lead it back, and although he be repulsed incessantly, incessantly he returns to the charge, until he has achieved the conquest of his love.

Is it not thus that the adorable, wholly lovable Saviour deals with me?  
Veritable Prodigal Son, etc.

(Today's consideration is on preparation for mass). [Readings ...]

**Fifth day: the guide who puts us back on the right road.**

*Thirteenth meditation:* the Kingdom of J.C. and the obligation priests have to serve him by imitating him.

First point: parable of St. Ignatius to enroll everyone to follow and imitate J.C. Second point: the special obligation priests have to follow and imitate Jesus Christ.

After learning in the first week what our last end is, and seeing and deploring our trespasses, we ought to have conceived a great desire to enter into the way of salvation. But for that we need a guide. And it is this guide that St. Ignatius gives us in the second week where he proposes the virtues of the life of J.C. for our imitation, and especially in this first meditation on the kingdom of J.C. where he proposes it to us under the image of a king who urges his subjects to follow him to battle.

St. Ignatius' parable is admirable and finds application marvellously in every situation. I have been like the others called to fight under this great King against his enemies who are also mine. I was enrolled from my birth at the time of my baptism in his army, but I had scarcely reached the age of reason when seduced by the enemy I would throw myself into his ranks. Before long I was recalled to my duty, but my sojourn amongst the rebels, by accustoming me to revolt, had given me the taste for independence and even though I lived in the very camp of the King, nourished at his table, even so I was guilty of entering into relations with the enemy. This infidelity soon led me to open defection, and once again I deserted the standard of my Prince to fight in the enemy ranks. Here I bore myself all too well; I was close to rivalling the most able of them; with one exception, all their manoeuvres were familiar to me, and that one too, for which, thanks be to God, I had conceived a kind of repugnance, I would doubtless have learnt in the end, if the Lord who even then had his sights on me had not preserved me from this final wretchedness. This generous Prince watched out to save me, he ambushed me at the moment my thoughts were far from him, and binding me once again more by the bonds of his love than those of his justice, he brought me back to his camp. Yet again I had escaped him, blind fool that I was. But this time it was for ever, yes for ever, for ever! May the memory of my revolt perish, or rather may I never forget it all my

life, for nothing is more capable of attaching me to my King than the thought of my treason and his clemency. Ah! I would have counted myself happy if in pardoning my crime he had confined me amongst the slaves charged with the lowest tasks in his army, but no, prodigy of goodness, he has raised me to the highest rank of his army, he has commissioned me in a high command. Ah! now it is up to me, sustained by his grace, not to betray his expectation. Yes, my King, I seem to burn with desire to distinguish myself by some striking feat of arms, my every desire is to wash away in my blood the shame of my past defections and to prove to you, if need be, in fighting for you that your magnanimity has found the way to triumph over an ingrate and his treachery.

[p. 27] All metaphor aside, I have been a sinner, a great sinner, and I am a priest. With the exception of having defiled my body with women, a wretchedness from which the goodness of God has preserved me as by a miracle, I have followed every maxim of a corrupted world. The evil has been done, good alas still remains to be done. What I have done up to now is not worth mentioning. People are deceived, I am falling far short of my obligations. I must pay double and when I compare my way of acting with that of my model, my God! how far I am still from it! Pride, anger, seeking of self, etc. How indeed can I say: *Vivo ego iam non ego vivit enim in me Christus* [Gal. 2:20]. There are no half-measures, if I want to be like Jesus Christ in glory, I must first resemble him in his humiliations and sufferings, like Jesus crucified; let us try therefore to conform in all I do to this divine model so as to be able to address to the faithful these words of St. Paul: *imitatores mei estote sicut et ego Christi* [I. Cor. 4:16]. If these words cannot be applied to me, I must renounce reigning with Jesus Christ in his glory.

*Fourteenth meditation: on the humility of J.C. in the incarnation.*

(After forming in a general way the intention of following and imitating the Saviour, I must see in detail in what precisely he wants me to imitate him, and what are the means that he judges the best adapted to make amends for the glory of his Father, which is the intention of his incarnation, and what I should have worked on in the preceding meditation. That is what we shall see in the examples of his hidden life. For, although there is no mystery at all in the Saviour's life that cannot furnish us with examples of every virtue, it seems even so that there is in each mystery a particular virtue that shines out. Humility is visible in particular in the incarnation, poverty in his birth, mortification in the circumcision, abandonment to his Father's will in the flight into Egypt, obedience in the dependence he had

on Mary and Joseph during the 30 years of his hidden life. There are then these five virtues opposed to the five principal obstacles that impede the reestablishment of God's glory and his Reign in man's heart, namely, pride or the excessive desire for glory, avarice or the insatiable desire for riches, sensuality or the disordered love of pleasure, ambition or over-eagerness for advancement and grandeur, finally the spirit of independence which results in one always wanting to follow one's own will; these are then the five virtues directly opposed to those five vices which will be the object of the following meditations). This foreword comes from Father Neveu.

First point: the humiliation of the Saviour in the incarnation. Second point: man's glory in self-emptying since the incarnation.

The considerations of this meditation made a deep impression on me. The first, that Jesus Christ was truly reduced to nothing by the incarnation [p. 28]. *Exinanivit semetipsum*, and that it was only the *Man-God* who could truly abase himself. God was unable because glory, majesty and grandeur are his essential attributes. Man was equally unable, as he could not place himself lower than is his due. But in the Man-God fitting all man's weaknesses to God, the Omnipotent became weak, the Eternal became a day-year old child, etc.

Another reflection: that nothing makes us see more clearly the value of God's glory, and what an outrage it is to violate it, than seeing a Man-God immolate himself to make amends.

Thirdly, that Jesus Christ who is Eternal Wisdom having chosen humiliations and self-emptying to make amends for his Father's glory, it follows necessarily that this is *the most suitable means to glorify God*.

This last consideration especially struck me. I confess to my shame that it had never occurred to me previously, it gives me pleasure, satisfies me, I hope with God's grace to draw some consequences that will be infinitely useful for me. There is no other response, one must conform oneself to his conduct. My soul, what is going on in you at this moment? You are afraid to say because you want to be sincere. The most natural conclusion would be to make the resolution to so love humiliations, whose whole value J.C. our divine model has disclosed to us, that you would desire them, seek them out, rejoice when they come your way. That precisely is what ought to happen, but do not get alarmed without cause, it is not necessary to get to that point all at once. Let us begin by setting out on this short cut to heaven, let us begin with a first step, let us verify our undertaking, set an objective, consider the markings the great Model left behind

him, let us lean on his arm, and soon we shall be on the way; who knows! perhaps we too will run on this way.

The first step, embarking on this way, is by not repulsing humiliations, not fleeing them and accepting them with resignation when they come our way, when God in his goodness sends us them to test us, to try to get us used to this solid fare.

[p. 29] Thus true grandeur is in humiliations. The creature's glory will always be the Creator's glory, now J.C. having chosen humiliations precisely to give glory to God, it is certain that it is by humiliations, etc. Again, O.L. being the principle of the whole glory of a Christian, we can only be truly great when we draw near to him, and try to be like him.

So! We will esteem as unworthy of a man what the man-God judged worthy of himself! How that truth cries out to be meditated! How apt it is to bring us to overcome the quite contrary inclinations of our corrupted nature! Yes, my God, I will make it the frequent subject of my reflections and your grace will bring me to an understanding of it.

*Fifteenth meditation:* the poverty of J.C. in his birth.

First point: the poverty of J.C. in the crib. Second point: how clerics should imitate the poverty of J.C.

First prelude: consider the Child Jesus in the crib in Bethlehem: God a child on some straw.

Second prelude: ask for the grace to profit from this example to reform us in our habits.

It would be too much for the Son of God made man to be born in a carpenter's shop. ... He is the master of hearts and he does not draw on his power to awaken feelings of compassion for his holy Mother who was carrying him. She is constrained to take refuge in a stable, and there was never a child so poor as the son of God. He is omnipotent, so he is born poor only because he wanted it. He is infinitely wise, so he could only choose the best. So poverty is preferable to riches.

Excellent reasoning from which a Christian will never be able to run away. Poverty is preferable to riches. So, if one is rich, one must be detached from riches, one must joyfully strip oneself, reduce oneself in spite of opulence to interior poverty, namely in the midst of abundance deprive oneself of more than what is superfluous; so if one is poor, one must really guard against the desire to become rich, submit with

resignation, with pleasure even to the privations that are a consequence of poverty. Such is the teaching of the Saviour, and who is the man who would dare complain when J.C. willingly practiced it himself.

And what is true for all Christians, is it not all the more so for a cleric?

Let us conclude, conclude from the general to the particular. I must then be detached from goods, the ease and comforts of life. I must beyond a shadow of a doubt [p. 30] suffer sometimes at least what poor people endure, a little of those privations which were the lot of the Saviour, not take advantage of riches, ease, etc., except to relieve the misery of the poor. To be detached especially in the heart from those things that J.C. despised, imitate St. Charles, my patron, who practised poverty, misery even in his underclothing. Pray the Lord to enlighten me to know if he demands still something more, etc.

(Today's consideration. The ordering of the day and the Christian's actions). [Readings ...]

### **Sixth day: pursuit of the virtues of the hidden life of J.C.**

*Sixteenth meditation:* J.C.'s mortification in the circumcision.

First point: the example of mortification that the Lord gives us in his circumcision. Second point: the Saviour's mortification must be the motive and model of our own.

True mortification comprises two things: bodily pain and a constriction of the spirit. One must mortify the body by making it suffer. One must mortify the spirit by doing it violence.

These conditions are found in O.L.'s circumcision which is very painful for the body, very humiliating for the spirit.

He only suffered in his body because he had taken on himself the likeness of sin. Myself I must make my body suffer, because it has often been the tool for sin, because I have branded it with the mark of sin. Tertullian says that a sinner is a man born for penance. What penance have I done up to now? It is not worth counting. But one must think again about this, and since my Director, to whom I must submit out of obedience, is opposed for good reasons to my doing certain things most suited to the mastering of the body which must be treated like a rebellious slave, ever ready to betray his master, that is to say, one should give him both bread and the stick, as the old proverb has it, I must find some other way, by repressing its tastes, denying it a lot of permissible things, requiring of it assiduous service,

giving it neither [p. 31] too much sleep or food or ease or comforts, none at all of these two latter if at all possible, mortifying the eyes, tongue, taste, etc. All of this can be done, I must in consequence do it, and I will so act with God's grace as not to miss out on it, until better comes along.

But that is not all. Mortification of the mind and heart must not be forgotten. In the midst of the innumerable dangers that surround a priest, if he does not exercise over himself a continual vigilance, he runs the risk of perishing. The Kingdom of heaven is only for those who subject it to violence: *Violenti rapiunt illud* [Matt. 11:12]. One must work at it each instant of the day. To continually stamp out those passions that would be reborn from their embers, to calm the first movements of a heart susceptible to a number of disordered affections, to combat especially that self-love, eternal enemy of our every action that it corrupts, vitiates, renders useless for salvation and often even makes damnable. One must continually keep this lazy soul on the alert to acquire the eternal goods, lest its corrupted inclinations drag it towards the abyss. One must, oh! what must one not do? God's grace, helping the will, will enlighten it on what it must do in this respect, and give it the strength to do it. Forward, forward, let us adopt this trustful attitude, to work without delay.

*Seventeenth meditation:* J.C.'s flight into Egypt or perfect abandonment to Providence.

First point: the example O.L. gives of this perfect abandonment in the mystery of the flight into Egypt. Second point: the motives that lead us to imitate Jesus' example in this perfect abandonment.

If our faith were more lively we would say with more confidence this word that we have so often on our lips, and, it is to be feared, so rarely in the heart: *Our Father who art in heaven*. This consoling word that we should pronounce only with the most tender feeling of love and thanksgiving is the basis of all our hopes, the greatest motive we could have to [p. 32] abandon ourselves without anxiety to all the dispositions of Providence. Since God is our Father, it is for him to provide for all our needs, watch over the dangers that threaten us, etc.

Our adorable Saviour who was also his Son (not merely by adoption like us, but through divine and eternal generation) has given us the example of the consequences we should draw from this sublime prerogative. His whole life was for us a model of this filial abandonment to his Father's will. But his flight into Egypt presents us with more striking indications of it than any other circumstance. He flees as an infant to take refuge in a land

unknown, in the clutches of the absurdest of idolatries, etc. His precipitous departure does not give him time to provide himself with what would be necessary on such a long journey, etc. The Lord's command is made known to him, he submits, for as he himself said he came only to do the will of his Father, and not at all to give orders, but to obey in all things.

This precipitous flight, looked at with purely human eyes, was against the lights of reason; it was a seeming proof of weakness. Why does he not assert his mastery to bring Herod to his feet or to shatter this instrument made use of by hell to persecute him, etc. But God commands, his Son obeys, etc., he surrenders into his hands his honour, life, rest, etc. And let us not overlook one thing: namely that this abandonment in Jesus was purely voluntary; although he was an infant he enjoyed already, and from the first instant of his conception, all the faculties of his soul which received from the first instant of his union with the Word the plenitude of grace, etc., a necessary consequence of that hypostatic union, etc.

Have I taken as model in this total, absolute abandonment this divine Master who only acted in this way so as to give me the example of what I should do? Hardly. In all truth I do not get too upset over things that happen, but I do not act in the matters [p. 33] that are confided to me and that I ardently want to see succeed with this abandonment, I put too much of myself into them, I have too much fear of failure, I do indeed pray a little, but not enough, not as if I were counting on prayer, as the foundation, etc.

Yet nothing could be more reasonable than to abandon myself entirely to God in my needs as in my enterprises. He knows my needs, he is my Father, and an omnipotent Father, *Scit Pater vester caelestis quia his indigetis* [Matt. 6:32]. He directs everything in the universe; the smallest insect does not die except by his will; he himself said that my hairs are counted, what a motive for confidence in all that concerns my salvation, in things even that have only an indirect bearing on it, but which accord with his will. Yes, even for life's needs, for the successful outcome of undertakings, for everything in a word; his tenderness will provide for it if my trust is without limits, *Nemo tam Pater*.

This trust, abandonment is even a duty for it renders glory to God, for glory being an appreciation accompanied with love and praise, we cannot find a better way to indicate this appreciation, love, praise to God than by abandoning ourselves entirely and with a perfect submission to his will. It is the grace, O my God, that I am asking you for. I feel that over and above these determining and peremptory reasons, there is one that I must not



overlook: it is that without this abandonment, I will never possess my soul in peace.

*Eighteenth meditation:* Jesus' obedience in his hidden life.

First point: the perfect obedience he renders to his Father. Second point: the obedience Jesus renders to his Mother and to Joseph.

Oh! how different are God's judgements from those of men! The Saviour spends 33 years on earth. Of these 33 years, three only are consecrated to preaching, external works, etc., thirty are employed — in what? in retreat, prayer, manual work, obedience, dependence; but why, my Saviour, having so little time to give to men, do you seem to rob them of the greater part of it? It was not to get instruction, it was not to perfect yourself. The fullness of knowledge, wisdom and holiness rested in you. Why then make the world languish [p. 34] in expectation of its guide, of him who should teach it all truth, show it the way to heaven, break the chains that held it captive, etc. Such was the will of his Father, Jesus rendered more glory to God in the carpenter's shop than he would have done filling Judea with the brilliance of his miracles. It must really have been like that since Jesus thought so, since God his Father wished it. Meditate on this mystery, for it is a very puzzling one, from which however we can draw some practical truths calculated to encourage and console us.

1. Our perfection does not consist only in doing great things for God, 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 those brilliant works, etc., than long prayers, etc.

2. The hidden life is for many people more meritorious and a surer means to glorify God than would be the apostolic life. In it one dies more to self, humility is more assured, self-love, that feeds so easily on the lime-light, is buried as it were, etc.

What a well-spring of instruction! What a lot we owe the Saviour for having given us this knowledge by means of the preference he gave to this hidden life, sanctified by his example.

So, my soul, you have matter to reproach yourself with for not having imitated your divine Master in your behaviour, you have given yourself over to exterior works before you have been sufficiently tested in the obscurity of retreat, in the practice of humility, abnegation, that is why

your ministry is often unfruitful, why self-love is so alive in you, and your works so imperfect, etc. Let us seek a partial remedy for this disorder by not giving myself up to exterior works to such an extent as to lose interior solitude, by reentering into retreat as soon as my ministry ceases to be necessary to my neighbour, etc.

[p. 35] May the Saviour's obedience not only with respect to his heavenly Father, but also in respect of Mary and Joseph serve me as a rule to submit myself willingly, not only to events, but also to the wishes of others even when they are opposed to my own. It is not enough to submit oneself to superiors: perfection would lie in giving way to one's equals or inferiors. In this voluntary obedience, one should not be content with not grumbling, with not putting off doing it promptly, but it would be necessary for the will to submit interiorly.

I must certainly not forget that what made me suffer most at the time I was ill was finding myself in a position where I was acting wholly autonomously, in such a way that I did not know if my works, which lacked the merit of obedience, were agreeable to God.

Today's consideration: election. [Readings ...]

**Seventh day: the obligation of declaring oneself boldly for J.C. and imitating him in his public life.**

*Nineteenth meditation:* the two standards, or the obligation to declare oneself boldly for J.C.

(It was in this meditation that God inspired St. Ignatius with the idea of establishing an order under the name of Company of Jesus whose end was to fight under the standard of J.C. and declare war on his enemies. This meditation is deliberately placed here, because after conceiving the desire to imitate the virtues of Jesus' hidden life, one must like him come out from retreat to make public profession of following him by declaring oneself fearlessly on the side of virtue, and leading others in the same direction.)  
Father Neveu.

Yes, I have seen this formidable tyrant in all his pomp, I have seen him surrounded by his numerous satellites, and, too weak to resist the bait he knew how to offer to my inexperience, I ranged myself along with so many others around his throne to swell his cortege. I end up finally asking myself where all these promises would lead that I saw abound but rarely hold up [p. 36]. I looked within myself to find out if I was happy, I enquired

further and I understood that with Lucifer all happiness, even supposing that he could give it to the fools he abused, must come to an end within the short space of a lifetime. Then it was I bemoaned my unhappy trespass, and when reflection had calmed the delirium that had obscured my reason, I recognised that I had known nothing but unhappiness under his empire. I was young indeed, but I learnt for myself that the attraction of virtue is more powerful even than the attractions of vice, even in an age when passion is at its height, when one does not persevere in repulsing it without listening and keeping a sharp eye on it.

But how few there are who are wise enough to heed its lessons! Praise you Lord for enlightening me on the danger I was running. Would to heaven I had never turned from that standard of the Cross from which flow true joy and veritable happiness; few there are, it is true, who march behind it. For terrified by what they see, wretched mortals imagine that those thorns that crown it prick those who draw near it, that the lance pierces them, etc. Fatal error! Who will grant me, O my God, to undeceive the whole world of this! Might I not bring them to know what my own experience has taught me? With Lucifer there is a specious promise of joy, happiness, etc. The first-comers who are taken in seem to want to multiply the number of dupes, and they all cry out fit to deafen each other, "we are happy," "happiness is ours," but in reality there are only regrets, thorns, serpents under those rose-garlands, those purple garments, etc., while with the lovable Jesus, it is quite the opposite.

As there is open war between the two sides, Lord, I range myself on yours, I want, Lord, to fight for you [p. 37] to the death. Nothing seems formidable to me. If you are with me, your grace whose effects I have so often experienced is my guarantee of victory. But, Lord, search in my heart to cut off all that is not yours. My sojourn in the court of the Tyrant made me prey to and in fact left me with a thousand blemishes, a thousand imperfections that it is for you alone to destroy, etc.

*Twentieth meditation:* the three degrees of humility.

(After resolving to follow the standard of J.C. St. Ignatius proposed three degrees of perfection that he calls degrees of humility. He means by that the submission of man's will to that of God which is what humility consists in essentially.) Father Neveu.

First point: the first degree of humility or perfection consists in so submitting ourselves to God's will that we would rather lose goods, health, life itself, sooner than violate a single one of his commandments and lose his grace.

Reason, our advantage, the example of the martyrs speak loudly enough to us on this subject. It seems to me, o my God, if I am not deceiving myself, that my heart has such a disposition, that my will does not flinch. And where would I be, o my God, if it were not so? Pour forth continually the abundance of your graces in me, so that I may reaffirm myself more and more in this indispensable resolution. When I consider there was a time when without being threatened with any ill, and solely to please myself, I offended against you, and grievously, my conclusion is not merely that I must tremble at the danger, no: for my strongest support is your grace, as I have so often experienced, but my conclusion is rather that this mindfulness of my malice should excite me to an ever greater horror of myself, to a grief more lively for having preferred dung to you, and a firm and unalterable resolution to wish to wash away with my blood, if needs be, so black an ingratitude.

Second point: the second degree of humility or perfection consists in submitting oneself so perfectly to God's will, that one would rather lose goods, health, honour, and life rather than displease God in the least thing and deliberately commit a single venial sin.

Would that I could say with the same assurance on this point what I said on the former. Sometimes I would like to persuade myself that such is in fact the state of my soul, but my habitual imperfection does not let me believe it. Even so, could anything be more reasonable, and is there anything I should work towards with greater zeal? It seems to me, when I enter into myself, that it is quite true that I would like to sacrifice everything rather than offend my Master in the least thing; I tell myself that the more I offended him in the past the more gratitude demands of me the most scrupulous attention not to do anything that could displease him who, being able to punish my crimes with eternal punishments, granted me a generous pardon, and gave me time and grace to make good my faults. I count at these times on his help and what would seem impossible to my weakness seems easy, easy with his omnipotent virtue. But then, when I see that I am thrown at the first fence, etc., I do not know any longer what to think of myself, for can I flatter myself that in the midst of all my miseries there is not many a deliberate venial sin? Is that not all too believable in a life as lukewarm, as slothful as mine is? At least it is quite certain that often I have acted against the secret inspiration of grace on the vain pretext that what I was thinking of doing was not sinful, in this way preferring my feeble insights, even my prejudices to the lights of the Holy Spirit. But why beat about the bush? Without doubt I have committed many faults with an

at least practical deliberation, if I can so express it, namely, that while I did not precisely reason: although such-and-such a thing is a venial sin, I will allow myself to do it, but I did do, say or think without consideration things that were really faults without wanting to bring into my dealings that circumspection the want of which by itself was an infidelity.

Well, must I be discouraged over this? Certainly not; what has not come to pass in the past could well come about in the future; I still expect infinite acts of generosity from my God, and from the resolution that he inspires in me this retreat.

[p. 39] Third point. The third degree of humility or perfection consists in being in so disposed that although one would not be offending God by the enjoyment of riches, pleasures and honours rather than being in the opposite state, yet through a sincere desire to imitate J.C. one would prefer poverty to riches, sufferings to pleasure and humiliation to glory, in such wise that if by an ordinance of Providence one were obliged to live in a state of grandeur and abundance of all goods, one would always have a secret and continual inclination that would bring us towards the state of humility and poverty.

Here we have what is called having the mind of Jesus Christ. Father Neveu.

No, it is by no means an illusion, this last degree does not frighten my weakness. The two former articles do not seem even difficult to me. I admit that the last one would demand still a lot of work for me to adopt it in all its dimensions, for me to attain to making it the rule of my conduct. Not to desire glory, well and good, but to love humiliation is difficult. Let us by no means despair, with grace one will attain all in the end. I must begin by really establishing myself in the love of poverty, and sufferings, go on to the point of despising glory. God, I hope, will then give me the grace of loving humiliations, but it is a long-term project; the saints worked on it all their lives.

*Twenty-first meditation:* the three classes or types of persons who desire their salvation and their different dispositions.

First point: the false persuasion of those who imagine they want to follow Jesus Christ and achieve their salvation but without taking the

<sup>48</sup> Eugene's text ends here. Father Neveu's retreat lasts 10 days and comprises 30 meditations.

necessary means. Second point: this false persuasion is the source of the confusion and downfall of most Christians.<sup>48</sup>

### 131. Holy Mass.<sup>49</sup>

*St Philip Neri's devotion saying mass.*

[1814-1815]<sup>50</sup>

St. Philip Neri used to celebrate it with an extraordinary devotion. Sometimes he completely drained himself of strength; he had to distract himself before beginning, he trembled so much that the room where he celebrated shook. When he reached the offertory his joy redoubled and young though he was his arm trembled so that he was obliged to support his elbow on the altar to manage to pour the wine into the chalice. He always took a lot, and he was careful to choose the biggest hosts so as to keep his divine Saviour the longer in his breast. Frequently after the consecration the chalice was seen to be full of blood. At the elevation, he sometimes found it impossible to lower his arms, so that he would stay for quite a long time with arms raised, for the people to adore Our Lord Jesus Christ, he often rose on the tips of his toes, and many times his two feet rose off the ground.

At holy Communion, he tasted the body of Our Lord like a delicious food, and he could not do it in such a way as to avoid being seen.

When he consumed the precious blood, he drained the chalice with such feeling that one would have said he could not take his lips off it, and so gradually he took off the cup's gilding and even wore away the silver coating; one could see very clearly delineated the marks of his teeth. The ardour and feeling he put into this action could not but be visible to those assisting; this thought distressed him and is why he never wanted anyone

<sup>49</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-6. In the collection DM IV-6 have been grouped together 14 pages of notes taken by Eugene as he read the lives of the saints, including: saints Alphonsus, Bartholomew of the Martyrs, Charles Borromeo, Francis Borgia, Francis de Sales, John Baptist, Joseph, Leonard of Port-Maurice, Louis of Grenada, Peter and Philip Neri. In all these notes there are but few personal reflections. Sometimes we have extracts or again, as here, a brief summary of a chapter. We are publishing just this one page as a sample and because Bishop de Mazenod always himself celebrated mass with a lot of fervour.

<sup>50</sup> An undated page, but belonging no doubt to the years 1814-1815. On July 1, 1814, Eugene asked Forbin-Janson to bring back for him from Rome a biography of St. Philip; in 1815 he affirms that he is delving into the Constitutions and Rules of St. Philip (letter to Tempier, October 9).

to hear mass near the altar he was saying it at, and he told his server to come up for the ablutions only when the sign was given for him to approach.

He ended up not saying mass any longer in the church; he celebrated in a house chapel, where he could give free rein to his tender devotion. Those assisting, and the server, retired after the *Agnus Dei* after extinguishing the candles and lighting a lamp; windows and door were shut so no one could hear his sighs, cries of joy, etc. A little sign was hung above the door with the words: *silence, Father is saying mass*. Two hours later the server returned, and knocked on the door; if St. Philip answered, he went in, lit the candles, opened the windows, and the Saint went on with the mass complaining that the time had flown by so quickly. When there was no reply, the server went away, and came back sometimes more than once without being able to go in; finally when he was let in he would find the Saint in a state fit to pass out.

When he distributed holy communion, he would go into transports of joy that were without doubt well-suited to draw the fire of the divine love into the heart of those who received Our Lord from his hands.

Great Saint, obtain for me some little part of your love for Jesus Christ, that this divine Master need suffer no more my lukewarmness and the pitiful dispositions with which I so often receive him. God of love, give me your love through the intercession of your servant Philip.

### **132. To President de Mazenod, in Palermo.<sup>51</sup>**

*Napoleon's return, backed by the army. Honour and religion have gone by the board. Eugene offers his services as chaplain to the royalist forces.*

L.J.C.

Aix, March 26, 1815

... However low my opinion of the human race, I would never have gone so far as to suppose it could sink so low as we see it now. What a nation we are! Along with faith, it has lost all sense of honour, probity, etc. One group openly betrays the most sacred of causes; they give their oath only the better to deceive an all too generous Prince who had heaped these traitors with favours and benefactions; the rest would almost be tempted to

<sup>51</sup> Orig.: Aix, Bibl. Méjanès, B 69.

stand by as unruffled spectators of a struggle that scarcely seems to interest them, although their happiness depends on it. Egoism has led to total aridity, national honour has gone by the board along with religion. What a despicable people! But we must be fair; it is the army who are guilty of this crime rather than the nation. You can see this clearly in these parts and in several other provinces.<sup>52</sup>

I have only time to assure you we are well, that I am the calmest of men and the one least alarmed. My trust in [p. 2] Providence is unlimited. I have written His Grace the Duke of Angoulême to offer him my services for his troops. I have not heard a thing in reply, perhaps I never will; but I have done my duty, which required of me this act of allegiance. Not being able to serve my King with a sword, I must serve him with every means my ministry gives me.

Goodbye, I send you all my affectionate greetings. Within a month we shall have beaten and punished all our enemies, who are those too of honour, the common good, and religion.

### **133. To Léon-Jules de Saboulin, congregationist.<sup>53</sup>**

*Man must praise God in the name of every creature. Advice for the holidays.*

Aix, September 9, 1815

My dear friend, you are right, for a Christian the whole of nature comes alive; his attentive soul hearkens to the mute voice of even inani-

<sup>52</sup> Allusion to the Hundred Days, Napoleon's return from March 1 to June 18, 1815. Defeated at Waterloo by the English and the Prussians, he was forced to abdicate. The Duke of Angoulême at the head of some regular troops had tried to put up some opposition to the soldiers loyal to Napoleon; Eugene had offered him his services.

<sup>53</sup> Copy in *Notices Necrologiques* II, 203. L.-J. de Saboulin (1801-1871) was ordained priest in 1852 and entered the Congregation in 1853. We are publishing this letter by way of a sample of the small number of those we still have, written to various congregationists. We have however over 200 letters written by some thirty of them to Eugene, especially from 1814 to 1821.

<sup>54</sup> Léon-Jules had written from Beauplan on September 5, 1815: "Sir, I do not think I can better begin my letter than by giving praise to Him to whom all praise is due. I was thinking yesterday, as I gazed at the stars, the beauty and immensity of the heavens, what must be the power of their creator, for whom a single word sufficed to create them! ... I cannot help but feel sad when I think I am so far from a director and a congregation so beneficial to me. How long my exile is! I think, Sir, you can rightly call the congregation, where I have begun to taste true happiness, my native land not of the flesh but of the spirit! ..."



mate creatures, and he readily assumes responsibility for settling the debt of gratitude they are incapable of paying to the common master of all nature.<sup>54</sup>

Take advantage of the little time you have to spend in the countryside to recreate yourself and build up your body, so that it can give you good service in the works you will soon be undertaking with fresh energy. Do not study during the holidays except by way of recreation. There is a time for everything. Now you must slacken the bow so it will carry the farther when you need to use it. The advice I am giving is not difficult to follow, but even if you find it hard to follow, I think you should make the effort.

Goodbye, very dear friend, affectionate greetings to you and your brothers, for I really love you all.

Our congregationists send their thanks for the remembrance; they send their greetings. Everything is going well as usual, thanks to God who protects us. Pray for us as we pray for you and come back soon safe and holy. You know that I am your best friend for life.

Eugene de Mazenod

### 134. [To President de Mazenod, in Palermo].<sup>55</sup>

*Eugene is trying to convert La Poire and is no longer insisting on the return of the Mazenods. He would have gone to see them in Palermo if he were less "tied up" by his ministry in Aix. Vocations to the clergy are coming from among the poor.*

Aix, September 15, 1815<sup>56</sup>

... What you say about La Poire<sup>57</sup> is very true. So it is not just out of kindness I asked you for a letter for him, but because of your business relation with him. What you indicate to me for him is enough; I will tell him. He is known as a supreme egoist; I regret it, and even more that he pays little heed to his salvation. I am all the more concerned that he will in all

<sup>55</sup> Orig.: Aix, Bibliothèque Méjanes B 69. We leave out most of the paragraphs of this letter in which Eugene talks about the pension he must get for his father.

<sup>56</sup> An undated letter, following that of September 2. In his answer dated December 10, 1815, the President says he has received the letter dated "September 15."

<sup>57</sup> La Poire, nickname of the marquis Boniface de Périér, childhood friend of the President.

probability be caught unawares by death, which he is afraid of in a way that is at once dreadful and laughable. I see him rarely as I am too busy to see him often. However, for the good of his soul, I regale him each time I meet him with the story of some sudden death; it is with the intention of getting him to come back sincerely to God, who will lose patience in the end with his holding back.

[f.2] ... You are right to think that after what has happened, I will change my tone a little concerning your coming back. ... However it is hard to have to resign oneself at the expense of one's heart and its deepest affections; to have to renounce seeing a father and relatives like you, because it is not the King's pleasure to reward virtue, or his Ministers' to inform him when virtue languishes. If I were less tied up by the commitments I have made for myself here, if I were not afraid that my absence would do harm to the good I have begun to do among the youth, I would not have turned down the invitation made me to go to Rome. You can well believe that from Rome to Naples would be just a step for me, and with a bound I would be in your arms. But apart from the expense, that I had to take into account, I would feel responsible for the consequences of my absence for more than a hundred young people who live in the practice of every virtue in the middle of a town that does not excel in piety, but who still need my support, while no one in my estimation would be able to stand in for me. One day I will be more free, at least I hope so.

I am not thinking of having any more books forwarded from Palermo; I can get them cheaper at Turin. The Bishop of Vannes, Ferdinand de Bausset, nephew of the Bishop of Fréjus, has just arrived in our town; there is talk that he could become archbishop of Aix. But when are we going to show an interest in religion? We seem to think there is all the time in the world. What clergy we are getting today! Not a man of note among them; we are reduced to the poorest, most wretched, most abject in society. One can only hope that they will make up by their virtue what they lack in other departments, but they will need a lot of it.



The Hotel de Mazenod  
on Cours Mirabeau, Aix,  
where Eugene de Mazenod  
lived from 1782 to 1791.



The city of Aix-en-Provence



## 1816 - 1831

### 135. Abridgement of the rule of life of the congregation-ists of the Christian Youth Association [of Aix].<sup>1</sup>

*Necessity of a regulation. General regulation: duties towards God and neighbour, devotions. Daily regulation, pious exercises, study, etc.*

1816

Christian life consists principally in avoiding evil and doing good, but one will never arrive at this highly desirable twofold end if one does not regulate the actions of the day, in such a way as to leave nothing to chance or caprice.

#### *Necessity of a regulation*

Experience proves that one runs the risk of not persevering in the long run in the practice of virtue, if one does not make captive the will under a uniform rule for every day of one's life, with the modifications that age and the differing circumstances in which one can find oneself must of necessity bring to it. Fervour, as everyone knows, is not always the same; mental fatigue, even a bodily indisposition that easily drifts towards idleness, leads eventually in all too many cases to a baneful lethargy; in the end whole days go by without one thinking of doing anything for God, and soon every day would end up like that. To avoid such an evil, one must submit oneself to a wise rule which reins in the mind's meanderings and

<sup>1</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM VIII-1a. Copy made by the congregationist Pecoul, but text composed by Eugene de Mazenod; in fact, he speaks of himself in the final paragraph and, furthermore, he develops themes one often comes across in his retreat notes from 1808 to 1816: blood of the Saviour, communion of saints, devotion to the Eucharist, Mary and the saints, etc. He may, however, have found inspiration partially from similar regulations; on July 19, 1814, e.g., he asks Forbin-Janson to bring him from Rome the regulations of youth congregations founded by the Jesuits and the Oratorians, etc. This regulation will have a certain influence on the Rule of the Missionaries of Provence: cf. E. Lamirande, *Les reglements de la Congregation de la Jeunesse ... et nos saintes Regles*, in *Etudes Oblates* 15 (1956) 17-33.

For these reasons we judge it opportune to publish this text, even if Father de Mazenod speaks about himself only in the last paragraph.

stabilizes the will's inconstancy; one must begin with the principle that on the good use of our days hangs the good use of life, and on the good use of life hangs eternity. To spend the day well, one must try to establish a balance between the various duties one has to fulfill such that one gives nothing to one at the [p. 2] expense of the others.

### *The congregationist's duties*

The duties of the congregationists of the Christian Youth Association confine themselves chiefly to piety and study. Under piety one includes all that they owe to God and neighbour. Study is the duty of the state of the majority; a small number may have social duties to perform.

### **General Rules**

#### *Distrust of self. Trust in God.*

Before showing them how to perform, structure, if one may use that term, the practice of these various obligations in the course of the day, one must remind them to equip themselves against the assaults of the self-love that would like to persuade them that they are able to do good of themselves, while they must place all their trust in God who will help them powerfully so long as they are humble, but who would punish them shamefully for their pride if they were so foolish as to count and rely solely on their own strength. Supported by God's powerful arm, they will have the fullest confidence in their success in the great matter of their salvation, encouraged by these consoling words of the apostle Saint Peter that we can make our vocation sure by our good works. However, so as to meet with fewer obstacles in the accomplishment of their good resolutions, they will recall and apply the various [p. 3] articles of the general regulation of the congregation and notably, so as to conform with what is laid down on this matter, they will make it an iron law to distance themselves from all occasions of sin.

#### *Flight from dangerous occasions of sin.*

They will therefore avoid like the plague all dangerous company; they will never on any pretext whatsoever go to the theatre, school for impiety and wanton conduct as they have reason to fear through the experience of others; nor furthermore will they indulge in dancing, in the firm conviction that dancing is a dangerous pastime which cannot be tolerated in Christianity.

#### *Attendance at the sacraments. Love of God. Horror of sin.*

To fortify themselves for the various struggles they may perhaps meet with in this matter, they will take every care to frequent the sacraments; it is by their means that they will keep themselves in God's grace and grow

and advance in virtue; with this in mind they will go to confession every fortnight and to go communion as often as their confessor permits them.

They will love God above all things, for his divine son our Lord J.C. they will have the tenderest gratitude for all the benefactions he has heaped upon them and all the graces he never ceases to pour out on them every day. And so as to give proof to God that these feelings are firmly engraved and uppermost in their hearts, they will always have a very great horror of mortal sin and if ever, as will happen all too often, they should be tempted to commit it, they will immediately have recourse to the [p. 4] Lord to ask him ardently for the strength to resist the enemy of their salvation and to protest at the same time, with all the sincerity of their soul, that they would rather die than consent ever to offend so good a master who must one day be so awesome a judge. Their love for God and desire for their soul's salvation will carry them still further, for they will be very vigilant over themselves, to avoid committing, with deliberate intention, the least venial sin. These are elicited excessively as it is in a first movement coming from human weakness; furthermore, the consequences of venial sins voluntarily committed are, usually, very sad, and this salutary fear is a second reason which will bring them to use their best efforts to abstain from committing them. However, if by misfortune, it comes about that they offend the good God, they will take care not to fall into discouragement; this would be a worse fault than the first; on the contrary, profoundly humiliated by their fall, they will not put it off until the morrow to ask for God's pardon; they will deem nothing to be more important than going to lay their faults and repent of them at the feet of the minister of reconciliation, and, after drawing new strength in the sacrament by the application of the blood and merits of J.C., they will begin again, with renewed ardour and even more circumspection, to serve God and live as good Christians.

### *Devotion to the Most Holy Virgin.*

They will call in aid to that end all the desire the Most Holy Virgin has of cooperating in their salvation, but they [p. 5] will not wait until they have experienced deplorable falls to place themselves under her powerful protection. From the moment they entered the congregation, they took this holy Mother of God as their advocate and patron; the devotion they will have for her will be their safeguard. It is in her that a congregationist must place all his trust, and the whole host of the virtuous the Church holds in her bosom is our guarantee that this hope could not be mistaken.

*Devotion to Holy Guardian Angels and to one's Patron.*

They will also have a tender devotion towards their guardian angels and holy patrons whom they will often invoke during the day, and they will make it a rule never to forget in their prayers the holy souls in purgatory; so it is that, to the great common good, this wonderful communion functions which is the strength and consolation of all the Church's members.

*Respect for churches and for priests.*

The respect they will have for God will extend, naturally, to the places sanctified by his real presence and to the persons who are specially consecrated to him.

*Duties towards parents.*

They will love and respect their parents, defer to their equals, respect their inferiors and live in peace with everyone.

*Charity for the poor. Love of neighbour. Dangerous conversations.*

They will have a compassionate charity for the misery of the poor and they will count themselves happy to be able to relieve, in their needs, these suffering members of J.C. They will speak only good of their neighbour and they will never tolerate someone harming his reputation in their presence [p. 6]; if they do not carry the authority to prevent the disorder, they will bear witness, by their serious mien and deep silence, to their disapproval of it; if they are in a position to leave without causing problems, they will do so. They will exhibit the same circumspection as to any talk in their presence against religion or good morals, with this difference that, even if it does cause problems to leave, they will not hesitate to take this course of action, the danger of seduction being, in this case, infinitely greater: it is in cases such as that of which we speak, that one owes one's salvation only to flight.

*Bad books. Confessor.*

They will never permit themselves to read any book that wounds faith or morals, the very word "novel" will be a bar to the entry of any book contaminated by it into their library; there is so little of this genre that one may permit oneself to read that one can, without hesitation, make a general rule never to open any. So as not to be exposed to waver in a matter of such importance, they will abstain from ever reading any book, be it religious or profane, without obtaining the permission of their confessor. I presuppose that this director is an educated man; for, if he were not, one would have to



bring one's trust elsewhere, education being a quality as essential as holiness for the direction of [p. 7] souls. When the situation arises that they have to make this choice, let them be really convinced that it is a decisive one for their salvation. They will pray a lot and with a lot of fervour for God's grace to make it well. They will consult wise and enlightened people and will conclude in the end by giving the preference to the one whom the Lord shows them is the most able to help them to practice virtue and advance in the ways of perfection. This choice, once made, they will stick to and not change again, unless they have very strong reasons for doing so.

After laying down these general rules, here now is the detailed daily regulation.

## **Daily regulation**

### *Rising*

Knowing the value of time and the danger of laziness, the congregationists will jump promptly out of bed as soon as it is time to get up, and if it costs them a little to be faithful to this article of their regulation, one which is more important than they realize, they will take care to offer this little mortification to God, at the same time as they give him their hearts and first thoughts as they make the sign of the cross. The time for getting up and the time one should give to sleep are not fixed, as they depend on the particular circumstances of each one's health, but one can say in general that it is good to go to bed early and to get up early; and that it would be difficult to excuse from laziness one who stayed in bed for more than eight hours. They will dress with modesty, filling their minds with good thoughts; the spiritual reading [p. 8] they will have done the previous evening can furnish them with many such.

### *Morning prayer*

The first thing they will do after dressing will be to give God the homage of their adoration, thanksgiving, and love by their vocal prayer called "morning prayer"; it will be done kneeling at the foot of the crucifix that every congregationist should have by his bed; this prayer must not be too long, but it should be fervent, for it is on it that depends in great part the rest of the day. One should also offer God, in this prayer, all the actions of the day so as to render them meritorious for heaven. One should also form the intention of obtaining all the indulgences one can, even those of which one is unconscious, and, as much as possible, by way of suffrages for the holy souls in purgatory. To succeed in praying as one should, it is

important to really grasp the presence of God and one's own wretchedness, and it would be helpful to say with one's heart and one's lips this saying of the patriarch Abraham: "I will speak to my Lord even though I am but dust and ashes ..." *Loquar ad Dominum meum cum sim pulvis et cinis.*

### *Meditation*

Immediately after prayer, it would be of the highest importance for the congregationists [p. 9] to make at least a quarter of an hour's meditation. This meditation, even if at first it were simply a meditated reading, is the means for getting used, little by little, to entering into oneself and reflecting on the great Christian truths, to governing from early morning the conduct one should evince throughout the day, to looking ahead for occasions of sin that may be met with there, and to arming oneself in advance with the taking of good resolutions. Then they will devote themselves to their ordinary occupations, beginning always with a short invocation of the Holy Spirit for success, with his help, to better fulfill their task.

### *Mass*

It would be desirable for the congregationists to be so imbued with respect and love for the holy sacrifice of the Mass, so convinced of its excellence, that is beyond all telling, of the incalculable benefits the faithful derive from it by assisting at it, and the heavy account to be paid to God if, by negligence or without sufficient reason, a person excuses himself from it, that each of them never let a single day go by without hearing Mass; as a minimum no one should excuse himself from fulfilling this consoling duty of religion and piety on days off during the week. It is understood that the best way of hearing Mass is to follow throughout the prayers and actions of the priest who is offering the holy sacrifice [p. 10].

### *Spiritual Reading*

They will do each day at least a quarter of an hour's spiritual reading of some pious book. In holiday time they will do a half-hour. Spiritual reading is a daily food necessary to maintain oneself in the fear of God; this exercise is besides most useful for acquiring knowledge of one's duties and learning to walk in the ways of salvation. Each one will ask his confessor what book he thinks will help him most. Before beginning this reading, they will invoke the lights of the Holy Spirit with the *Veni sancte*, commend themselves briefly to the Blessed Virgin, their guardian angels and saintly patrons, then they will do their reading in an unhurried attentive manner, reflecting on what they have read and applying it to themselves; the more one reflects, the more fruit one derives from this exercise.

Finishing up they will pray to the Lord again that he will deeply engrave in their hearts the truths he has just taught them and the good inspirations he has given them, so they may put them into practice and profit from them.

The devotion the congregationists pride themselves on towards the Blessed Virgin would be pure speculation if they were not to manifest it [p. 11] outwardly in some way, either imitating her virtues or saying some prayers to her.

### *Rosary*

The private prayer they impose on themselves is the one most recommended by the Church to the faithful who want to honour the Blessed Virgin and to whose recitation the Sovereign Pontiffs have granted very great indulgences, namely, the holy Rosary. They will adopt a method of saying it in the course of a week, and, to make it easier, say every day two decades of the Rosary during the first six days of the week. The seventh day they will say one extra. Really the least one can do is to render this little homage, which is so easy besides, to the holy Mother of God, and our Mother too, whom one professes to honour and love in the Association which was begun and grows under her auspices. It is understood that one should ask Mary with confidence for everything one wants to obtain from God.

### *Visit to the Blessed Sacrament*

They will make it a duty not to let the day go by without going to pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament; it would be desirable to take at least a quarter of an hour over this visit, but even were it only five minutes, it would always be a thing of infinite value. One would have to be totally lacking in faith to cast doubts on this proposition [p. 12]; it will be enough to recall that Our Lord dwells among us precisely to receive our homage and pour out on us his benefactions. The tabernacle is like the throne of mercy from which he pours out with open hands the most precious of graces on those who have enough love to come to his feet as a sign of their gratitude, and enough trust to lay bare their distress and await the soothing influence of his infinite goodness. *Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis et ego reficiam vos*. Before leaving the church where they have visited Our Lord, they will not forget to say some prayers to the Blessed Virgin, for one should never separate the Mother from the Son if one wants one's prayers to be heard.

This exercise should be done so far as possible in the afternoon or evening, the rest of the day being given to study or work.

### *Study*

It cannot be gainsaid that it is by the accomplishment of one's duties that one sanctifies oneself; now, study is at this time the common duty of the majority of the congregationists; they must therefore devote to it the time necessary, taking care to accept in a spirit of penance the boredom and difficulties they may experience in the accomplishment of this important — very important — obligation. They must study wholeheartedly, with exactness and attention, while reflecting that God, who imposed this task on them, is present and sees the manner in which they are discharging it.

### *Recreation*

They must however be careful to intersperse all their various exercises with wholesome amusement [p. 13], in such a way that they never let themselves be so carried away by the love of study as to neglect to give to the spirit and even the body the relaxation necessary, that is called recreation.

### *Music, Drawing, Dance.*

If they are learning music, they must be satisfied with knowing what is needed for their amusement; it is a dangerous taste if they yield to it with too much ardour, it brings with it a lot of problems and many drawbacks. Drawing will always be preferable; it is a more useful talent, more becoming, a longer-lasting taste, the friend of solitude and recollection; while music ordinarily degenerates into dissipation, gives birth to and occasions a thousand further disorders it would be futile to discuss here but which often leave behind belated regrets along with considerable chagrin. Of dancing they will learn no more than is absolutely required for them to know how to present themselves well.

### *Presence of God. Ejaculatory Prayer.*

Finally, throughout the day, they should recall what is said in the general regulation on the exercise of the presence of God and the short and fervent prayers called ejaculatory prayers, which are strongly recommended there. In these ejaculatory prayers, they must frequently renew the intention formulated at morning time, so as to perform all their actions to please God, for this original intention may have been over-ridden by a contrary intention and this will in fact have happened through the least venial sin they may have had the misfortune to commit [p. 14].

*Evening Prayer. Examination of Conscience. Bed.*

They must try not to go to bed too late to be ready to rise in the morning the next day. Before going to bed, they must never excuse themselves from evening prayer and spend some moments examining themselves on how they have passed the day and particularly on the degree of exactness they have brought to observing their regulation. They must profoundly abase themselves before the Lord for the faults they discover they have had the misfortune to commit. They must ask God's pardon for being unfaithful to the inspirations of his grace and make the firm and sincere resolution to conduct themselves better the next day. They must thank God too for the favours he gave them during the day. Then they will lie down while observing, as they get undressed, the same modesty as in the morning; as they get into bed they will tenderly kiss the feet of their crucifix, make the sign of the cross on themselves and their bed with holy water, commend their soul to God filled with the thought that sleep is the image of death and that that night could be the last of their life. When they are in bed, they will cross their arms on their breasts and go peacefully to sleep having on their lips and even more in their hearts the holy names of Jesus and Mary. If by chance they awaken during the night, they should immediately lift up their hearts [p. 15] to God, and, if they do not go straight back to sleep, they should pass the time with some good thoughts, for example, that at that very moment a great number of souls are cast into hell where they will dwell for ever for having been surprised by death after sinning.

Faithfully observing this regulation, the days of the congregationists will be full before the Lord, their actions will be an uninterrupted sacrifice of praise and honour for God, a continual prayer which will call down upon their souls heavenly blessings, consolations and rewards.

*Reminder*

He who wrote this regulation to procure them these precious benefits, beseeches the congregationists, his dear sons in Jesus Christ, never to forget him in their prayers, and to ask God insistently to deign to pardon him his sins; on his part, he will not grow weary in offering continually to the Lord the most pressing supplications to obtain their perseverance, and every day he mentions them in the holy Sacrifice, with all the fervour he can, so as to draw down upon those he cherishes so tenderly in Our Lord, all manner of graces, not only *de rore caeli*, but also *de pinquedine terrae*. Amen.

### 136. To François de Cannizzaro, in London.<sup>2</sup>

*Eugene has not forgotten his friend of Palermo days. He expresses regret for not having inspired him at that time with the same respect for and attachment to religion that he himself had then but that he smothered within himself. Dangers of wealth. Friendship.*

July 1816.<sup>3</sup>

Your address has just been sent on to me from Palermo by way of response to my request for news of you. They tease me over the constancy of my friendship towards you. For, they say, it is perhaps a little too much of a good thing when one gets taken up so often over someone who has not given me a thought since he saw me last. I am taking the bull by the horns and since, thanks to the kind concern of the friends I still have in Sicily, I know that you are living in London, I am going to seek you out there in all simplicity and take the risk that you don't know me any more. I am in all truth somewhat changed, [...] thanks be to God, but even so, practically speaking, my relation with you remains ever the same, namely, I am the best friend you ever had, and in fact my feelings must be of a noble quality to have survived such a great trial as that of being completely and unjustly forgotten; for the rest, my friend, it is not so as to praise myself, or heap reproaches on you, that I am writing to you today. I am not aware of ever having offended you, and it would be unbecoming for me to change my manner of behaviour at the very moment when I have the opportunity of reminding you of our former friendship and telling you how in its light I see you since the time religion and piety have taught me to govern my heart's affections and to love for God's sole sake even those I hold most dear.

Well then, if you are willing for me to say it: for nearly ten years *each day*, yes, each day, I have called God's mercy down on you to enlighten, bless and pardon you; 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

<sup>2</sup> Copy: Ms. Yenveux V, 189-190.

<sup>3</sup> The letter is undated in Yenveux. The President sent François's address in his letter dated February 27, 1816. Father de Mazenod needed money at that time at the beginnings of the Congregation; in this letter no doubt he asked François, who had married a rich English heiress, for help. Yenveux however only copies the extract published here.

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.

Perhaps you are surprised that I haven't yet said anything about your dazzling good fortune. It is not that I do not take pleasure in it, provided it is not an obstacle to your eternal salvation, for you know if there is anyone in the whole world who loves you better than I. What I have just shared with you is proof enough, if indeed you had some doubts about it, but what I have learned in that wonderful book which holds within it all knowledge, is that riches are often more harmful than helpful. I would be really happy none the less if you were to tell me in all its details about your present position and your past vicissitudes. Naughty friend, why have you deprived me of the consolation of hearing it told by your own mouth? I forgive you on condition that in future you treat me a bit better. Is your wife a Catholic? Are your children? And are you still one yourself? Dear God, what am I saying? Forgive, dear friend, my concern; tell me straight out. Let us write each other from time to time. You are no longer a child, and unless you are insensitive, my letters will always make some impression on you. The more you reread them in moments of calm, the more you will rediscover your Eugene and, if you still love him, what he has become by God's grace; do not despair, you will improve. If I am not mistaken, you are 32 years old, and I think I am writing you more or less on your birthday, it is in July isn't it?

### 137. To President de Mazenod, in Palermo.<sup>4</sup>

*Eugene is very busy but he is working for God's glory. Importance of expiating for one's sins by penance. He counsels his father who went to confession after being ill.*

Aix, July 8, 1816.<sup>5</sup>

[...] At present, I cannot do anything else but work, and it is quite contrary to my taste. But since God in his goodness requires it, I must conform. I begin usually at 5:00 a.m. and finish at 10:00 p.m., sometimes 11.00. I am lucky if I have time to say my office properly! It cannot be otherwise; after all, what does it matter? Provided that God is glorified and good gets done, that is all we can desire. That is the only reason we are here. What happiness to serve a master who takes everything into account for you. What folly to yearn for anything other than pleasing him! When will we be able to make these consoling reflections together and encourage each other to do everything for him, to consecrate to him all the strength, intelligence, health that we have left! [...]

By our sins we have run up a large debt that it is a question of discharging with penance and untiring good behaviour in public; this good behaviour in public may take the place of reparation that the church would have the right to exact. One must not be afraid of showing what one has become by God's grace. No more compromises with the world's maxims that are almost always opposed to those of J.C. Complacency in this matter often causes us to commit very great faults.

Tell the person you spoke to me about,<sup>6</sup> whom God has given the grace of coming to self-knowledge in time to spend the rest of his days in

<sup>4</sup> The original has disappeared. Copy in Rambert I, 189; Yenveux II, 103-104, V, 45, 236.

<sup>5</sup> Rambert writes: July 5, but July 8 is found each time in the three extracts copied by Yenveux.

<sup>6</sup> Eugene is speaking here of his father and, at the end of the letter, of his brother the Chevalier. The President had been ill in December 1815 and went at that time to confession. On February 27, 1816 he wrote: "I won't finish off without speaking with you about the most essential topic, that of conscience. Can you believe that in spite of my age and all the favours I have received from heaven in the whole course of my life, I am still wallowing like a filthy pig in the mud-bath of sin! No one has been more imbued than I with the truths of our holy religion, and never has anyone put them so badly into practice. God has finally had pity on me and given me the grace of drawing me out of the devil's empire, and I hope that he will keep me in my good resolutions and I beg you, each day at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, to ask him for me real compunction, a sincere sorrow for having offended him and final perseverance. ..."



expiating his faults, that he should not let a single day go by without sounding the depths from which the goodness of God has pulled him back, as by a miracle, to set himself a rule that obliges him to labour towards his salvation. Let him meditate each day on some great truths, truly direct his intention in his habitual actions even the most mundane; let him offer up his many difficulties, sufferings, afflictions in union with the Saviour's merits, for the expiation of his sins; he should not let himself be depressed at all by the sight of the little that remains for him to give to God in comparison with what he has given to the devil. This thought should lead him to do everything that depends on him for the reparation of his faults, but it must not discourage him. If the enemy attacks him in this area, he should recall the consoling parable of the worker who received his wage even though he came to work in the lord's vineyard only at the eleventh hour. He should pray a number of times during the day, read even if it is only for a half-hour some good book, and alternatively the life of a saint; nothing does more good. In the evening he should examine how the day was employed, take himself to task for his infidelity, if he has let pass more than a quarter of an hour without lifting up his soul to God with some short aspiration. But urge him especially, in my name, to go often, very often to confession. A comparison occurs to me: a very dirty pot in which the dregs have been deposited for a long time, and whose surfaces are all encrusted over, must, after being washed, be rinsed out several times; and then does he not still have need of a very great grace? Each time he receives the sacrament of penance, he receives an increase of sanctifying grace, and in the state of aridity his soul finds itself in, this font must needs flow without cease. With such a help, a lot of progress can be made. I take pleasure in the thought of this conversion; God could not give me a greater consolation, but I am still without the happiness of seeing its fruits with my own eyes. Be sure to tell this dear soul that I am helping him with all my power to thank the Lord for the outstanding favour he has given him; I ask the same grace for his brother.

### 138. To Father Charles de Forbin-Janson, in Paris.<sup>7</sup>

*Eugene is overwhelmed with work and apostolic concerns; he is ruining his health.*

[July-August 1816]<sup>8</sup>

I am so far from wanting to make excuses, my dear friend, that I am writing you on my knees, as I have a real sense of having given you offence. If I could have answered you immediately after I received your good, kind, touching letter of June 22, I would have written absolutely in the same vein; I would even have gone one better than you, but I feel that the length of my silence infects and weakens my cause in any tribunal other than that of your heart. Have no fear anyway that your latest reproaches have struck home. I knew before hand that I deserved them, and not a day passed without my making them against myself more than once. But what appears most shocking in my behaviour, is precisely the best argument I have on my side. If I was dealing with the person furthest from my heart, someone of no consequence, I would have hastened to answer so as not to appear lazy, etc. In your case, I did not bother. The same reasons that have got in the way of my writing you still standing, I did not feel obliged to bustle about to come in the end to what I always wanted to do and never did. I played, for the same reason, the same game with my father who was up in arms on his side. The upshot of it all is that I cannot get through all my work. The burden is so heavy that it frightens me sometimes for fear that it may totally overwhelm me. I did not write, because I put it off to the time I thought was coming when I would have an hour to myself, to do as I pleased with; and that moment never came. Today, I have taken my precautions. Even so, in the space of this wretched page I have just written, I have had to attend to several people and write three letters. If I told you everything I have to do as a matter of course, it would shock you. And what is killing me, is the thought that having to do in the course of the day a score of things over and above what I am able for, is giving rise in all I do to an involuntary interior agitation, that heats up my blood. I think it is one of the chief causes of the ups and downs of my health. Imagine, I see

<sup>7</sup> Orig.: Paris, arch. de la Sainte Enfance.

<sup>8</sup> Undated letter, no doubt written by Eugene before going for a break in Bonneveine; the letter was certainly written before the Fuveau mission, that began on September 1, 1816, since it speaks of that mission as future.

myself reduced to the point of taking salep. But I am talking too much of my wretched self.

Let us speak rather about you who have done so many fine things for God's glory. None of the things you told me were on the way have arrived. I do not have either your account or that of Mr. Rauzan. All I know I have learnt from what is said in public and through a letter Mr. Lieutard had passed to one of our friends.<sup>9</sup>

### 139. Annual Retreat made at Bonneveine.<sup>10</sup>

*Tiredness. Eugene's apostolic tasks impede him from attending to his own needs. Trust in God notwithstanding his lack of virtue. The good he has initiated may lead to substantial fruits later on, if he corresponds better with the graces he has received. Importance of doing God's will, as manifested in events, rather than follow his personal taste. The holiness of others is dependent on his own. Over-involvement that damages his ministry and health. Resolutions: more prayer, humility, meekness and patience. Other spiritual exercises.*

[July-August] 1816.<sup>11</sup>

[p. 3] Divine Providence, knowing my spiritual needs, has permitted a slight excess of bodily tiredness to cause my health to deteriorate and my brothers' charity to be unduly alarmed and require me to come into this desert place to take a little rest.

The doctor thought in this way to care for my health, and God, in all his goodness and mercy, was preparing me a means of salvation. I will try to profit from it and seriously examine my interior life, for my pressing tasks impede me, they really do not leave me the time, either when I am in town or on the mission, for thinking about myself. And what is the result? That each day I get more miserable, and, never having donned many virtues, I am left with nothing but rags.

<sup>9</sup> In the continuation of the letter, which is published in *Oblate Writings* 6, pp. 20-23, Eugene speaks of the Mission de France and the Missionaires de Provence.

<sup>10</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Postulation DM IV-2. Among the resolutions, Father de Mazenod sets out those belonging to Part One: "1. For the interior life." He writes nothing about the other resolutions he speaks of: "2. In my public life."

<sup>11</sup> At the end of July and the beginning of August, Eugene, tired out, went to rest at his cousin Emile Dedons' in Bonneveine. There he did his annual retreat.

This is a distressing thought, for since I am destined to busy myself continually with my neighbour's salvation, my position placing me continually in a multiplicity of relationships, if I do not have the talent, or rather, if God in his goodness does not do me the favour of letting me grow in virtue in the midst of this tumult of business and of sanctifying myself on the wing, I am a pitiable thing and certainly my affairs are in a real mess.

I have gone over, in the silence of this kind of [p. 4] unplanned retreat, not only what is written above,<sup>12</sup> which has brought back to mind the good sentiments the Lord has not ceased to give me and of which I have never profited as I should, but I have read too the resolutions I took in my various retreats, and especially those taken in Amiens, when I was preparing myself for the priesthood, and those taken in Aix in my subsequent retreats. I have read at the same time Mr. Emery's resolutions and a few works calculated to make me really re-enter into myself.

I notice first that in the midst of my extreme distress — for I am seeing myself as I really am, namely, absolutely deprived of any virtue, having only the desire for it and the will to work to get it — I note, not without surprise, that I am not bothered by all that. I have a great trust in God's goodness. *Tu Domine singulariter in spe constituisti me*: Ps. 4, and I have a kind of hopeful assurance, that he will grant me the grace to improve, for one thing is sure, I am not worth much right now. And the examen, of which I will leave some written extracts for my instruction, will convince me of this each time I light upon this paper. But I cannot cast off the mental attitude, less again the feeling of my heart, that, as my desire is to win the glory of God and the salvation of the souls he ransomed with his blood, by every means in my power, should it cost me my life, I cannot believe that this good Master will not grant me some consideration especially when I consider that my faults arise precisely from the fact that I am busy, seemingly by his will, with the works of his glory and the salvation of my neighbour.

Is all this an illusion? Rashness? I have no idea. I am writing what comes to my mind, without show or affectation, but with the will to work with all my strength to correct myself and do better in future. God in his goodness knows that I need this trust to act; this it would seem is why he gives it to me.

<sup>12</sup> These notes are written to follow on those taken in Issy in August 1812 (cf. above, n. 106).

In my Amiens retreat, going deeper into God's way of dealing with me, I came to the conclusion that he was expecting great things of me; and being already convinced that I was a very great sinner, I could do no other than empty myself in his presence, profoundly abase myself, and then say: *Ecce adsum*, counting myself only too happy that the good Master wanted in this way to furnish me with the means of discounting a little my great sins. I must often re-read what I wrote in Amiens, with the regret that I did not continue as I began. And as I experience a very great profit from this method, I will never fail, in my retreats, to put in writing at least some of the good thoughts God in his goodness gives me and the resolutions I make during these happy interludes.

I took note today that I was not [p. 5] mistaken and already some good has come of my ministry. I could even say some very great good, if I were to focus less on what it actually is than on what it may bring forth in the future, if my infidelities put no obstacle.

The youth foundation and that for missions were mine to do perforce, as God in his goodness had placed me in a position to do them; but how much better things these would have been, if I had put less of myself into them, if I had been more docile to God's inner voice, worked more for my own perfection, at least in profiting from all that was a distraction to me perhaps, because of my superficiality and dissipation, to make progress instead of going backwards. That is the point I have to reach with God's grace.

I must above all be really convinced that I am doing God's will when I give myself to the service of my neighbour, immerse myself in the external business of our house, etc., and then 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 the mercies of J.C. in his sacrament, someone comes for confession, I must leave O.L. 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 seek 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 visits, 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. But I am a long way from it as of now, through insufficient reflection and yielding too much to my natural ardour which makes me impatient of a task or, if you like, of an interruption that detains me, when I have something else to do that I regard sometimes as more important, and this happens 50 times a day.

So much for the reflections God's grace provided me with today on my return from Mazargues after my mass.

I am just back from Mazargues where I gave the sermon. I told those good people something I apply to myself, namely, that one must go to God through reflecting on his benefactions. We are, in truth, really thankless people if all the things God in his goodness has done for us make no impression on us [p. 6].

Up to now I could see myself as a private person, bound to yearn for his own salvation and do anything possible to reach it. That's fine, but, etc.

Now I have to make a very serious reflection, for my position has changed. Previously, if I were lazy and lukewarm, certainly it was the worse for me, but it was easy to remedy it, and the consequences were not serious for others. Today, if I am not fervent and holy, the works the Lord has confided to me will feel the effect, good will languish, and I will be responsible for all the consequences of this disorder. A powerful means to move me to renew myself in the spirit of my vocation and take efficacious measures to become holy.

I have to acknowledge that the multiplicity of tasks that overwhelms me, have done infinite harm to the accomplishment of the resolutions I took under God's inspiration.

That state of continual involvement I am in is unbelievably prejudicial to my interior life; and the way I carry out my duties is visibly harming my health.

So all this must be dealt with. My blood is so excited that I feel doubly brusque, which often makes me fail in charity, etc.

I do not possess my soul in peace. The least obstacle, the least opposition provokes me. I repulse, in all too human a manner, opposition that I should overcome and conquer by patience alone.

I gratify nature, moaning about my excessive load, etc. That gets me nowhere. It's because I am wholly carnal, human, imperfect.

Let's deal especially with the interior side; then we will deal with externals and take good resolutions for my relations with my neighbour.

## *1. Interior Life.*

### *Prayer.*

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, much less worry and control.

In line with this thought I take the resolution to manage my life in such a way as to do more praying than I have up to now. That's where I must get used to transacting my business and that of our community, youth, etc.

As well as the morning one, in common with everybody else, I will slip away for a few moments after dinner to resume this exercise before the Blessed Sacrament so far as possible.

### *Humility, meekness, patience.*

Since God in his goodness, to furnish me the means to expiate my sins, places in my hands things that are dearest to his glory, clearly I must neglect nothing to acquit myself well of them; but so as to achieve this more surely, I will really persuade myself that I can only bring ruin on his works, and do in fact bring ruin on them, by my pride, impatience, anxiety. It's not as if I attribute anything I do to myself, but even so I am not humble enough.

This is the reason, perhaps, as well as because of my natural brusqueness, for those interior movements of impatience that are often evident externally and scandalize those who witness them.

So I will work as well on this lovely virtue of meekness. I will encourage myself with the thought that I did make some progress in it; but as occasions became more frequent and more difficult, I have reverted practically to my natural state. Let's hope that with the help of grace I will be more fortunate in the future.

### *Mass, preparation, thanksgiving.*

Always for the same reason, the increase in things to be done which are, it must be said, beyond my strength, I have become strangely negligent in my preparation for and thanksgiving after Mass. Remedying this is a matter of urgency. There is an incalculable detriment and I feel it. It is rarely now I experience, during the holy Sacrifice, certain spiritual

consolations that constituted my happiness in a time when I was more recollected; instead, I have to combat ceaselessly distractions, worries, etc. By preparing myself again as I used to do formerly, I will obviate this major obstacle. The saints' example will give me ample material for reflection on this. I will examine, or rather, everything is put under examination. I am much too easily distracted after Mass, too ready to satisfy the indiscreet who come disturbing me when I descend from the altar.

### *Visit to the Blessed Sacrament*

My God, who would have predicted that anything in the world could distract me from duties whose performance was so consoling, that my negligence would go so far that I must at this moment seriously take myself to task for presenting myself before you in your sacrament with scant respect, at least with no show of eagerness, and with an insulting coldness, the very person you gave so many lights to and such an attraction for this mystery.

A million thanks are due you for having made me aware of my fault and my ingratitude.

How is it I have not returned sooner to my first fervour? Whenever I did my duty as best I could, has not my experience told me you had not changed from what you were and would not have ceased to be, if I had not sunk in your estimation. What a pitiful excuse busyness is. It is precisely what should bring me to your feet. I will return, Lord, I will return, and please God I may make that place my home always.

### *Divine Office*

And the divine office, why do I habitually say it so badly? I am failing so in my duty, I discharge my obligation very imperfectly; and so the holy task that should be my delight often feels like a burden. What folly to squander in that way the immense treasures God places in my hands, to be holding each moment pearls, precious stones, and to see in one's hands nothing but mud!

The ground is arid, sterile, the sweet dew falls but for lack of attention it does not fertilize the soil which soon will produce but thorns. What business can have priority over prayer?

### *Confession, examen.*

Finally, to end off what refers to my particular examen, I believe that a very powerful means of correcting myself both of the faults I have just accused myself of and of others that I will be looking at in "my public life, relationships with neighbours," is to prepare myself better for confession.



The fault I am pinpointing here is that of not examining myself with enough care; I glide too lightly over things that would certainly have made the saints lament profusely; I do not ferret out what is not apparent at first glance, but which I would perceive no doubt [p. 8] in a more reflective examination. It also has its origin in the omission of my daily examens, which I must put back into force. I must make these examens at least twice a day; but three times would be better: at midday, at the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and evening prayer.

### *Interferences with the exercises.*

Since I am so regularly disturbed and it is very often impossible for me, with the best will in the world, to do certain exercises at the prescribed times, and I am even sometimes obliged, to my great regret, to excuse myself, it is indispensable that I find a way to make up for it and obviate this drawback. The only way, I believe, is to act always in a perfect dependence on God's will, in perfect liberty of spirit, in union with God by an interior movement of adhesion to what it pleases him to ordain at that moment, in the persuasion that that is what he wants me to do, and absolutely nothing else.

If I act in this sense, the very action that frustrates me, that is at odds with me, will be more meritorious than what I would have preferred.

Essential rule: lift up one's heart to God before, during and after an action, act always in a spirit of faith.

### *Care of the Body*

Soul and body are too closely linked to discount the infinite importance of regulating the latter's habits in such a way that it does no harm to the operations of the soul through exhaustion, etc. It is more sensible to regulate it wisely and so be able to govern it and keep it always in dependence on the soul, in such wise as to lend it support, etc., than if, by compelling this mule, one were to reduce it to exhaustion, to the point of its lying down on the ground and being no longer in a state to go on walking. I have experience of such a set-back. It is tiresome no doubt that the body's energies do not match the soul's activity, but that is how it is and that is God's will. So one has to go along with this way things are structured and get what one can from the donkey, and not refuse him what is indispensably necessary for him to do his work.

### *Sleep*

So he must sleep and eat; and when he is played out he must rest.

It is a great pity I did not understand this a lot sooner. There is still time to get there, the damage is not irremediable; but it would be foolish to delay any longer.

Whatever happens, I will get the sleep needed so as not to be all-in when I get up in the morning, as is usually the case. I have been guilty of excesses in this area, going back to my first years in the seminary. I acknowledge I would be culpable not to change my ways, since my health, hitherto unfailingly good, has already suffered a lot in consequence. The saints' example seduced me, but it seems God in his goodness does not ask the same of me, as he seems to be warning me by a lessening of my energy and my health upset.

I think I will have to take seven hours' sleep. It's hard, I know, but what can I do, when God in his goodness and the doctors require it.

### *Meals.*

I have pretended up to now to have mislaid my stomach, and I have been quite successful in this. I believed an habitual fast, working though I was, was not doing me any harm at all; I was wrong. And so, those meals taken in the twinkling of an eye, all that gets me nowhere. Everything must have its time. That kind of behaviour is a real disorder.

If I sleep and eat, I am persuaded my chest will stop paining me. I should balk at nothing for the welfare of this instrument that is indispensable to a missionary.

That is enough for that section, it is already too long, but one must give it due attention.

## **140. Questions to be resolved.<sup>13</sup>**

*Should he continue with external ministry and do more confessional work for women?*

1816-1817<sup>14</sup>

### *First Question*

When I'm enjoying solitude, and can follow regular exercises, think about God's glory, pray, study, think only of my salvation, I am much

<sup>13</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-7.

<sup>14</sup> Questions that are undated but probably written in July 1816 or at the time of his journey to Paris in the second half of 1817, with a view to submitting them to Mr. Duclaux. The

happier, my conscience more at peace, I enjoy the service of God in his goodness and offend him less than when I am almost totally taken up with my neighbour, in confessions, preaching, consultations, arrangements, looking ahead, following up on business, including that of a temporal nature, which pertains to institutions founded for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. I am absorbed by all these things to the point of having time neither to eat nor to sleep. I am thrown into a state of continual distraction that comes very close to dissipation. I hardly ever have in this state a felt longing for devotion, I cannot focus my mind in meditation. Distractions pursue me right up to the altar, while on the contrary when my concern is only for myself, devotion fills my soul with happiness to the point of shedding tears whether of compunction or love, etc.

Should I abandon all exterior ministry and devote all my time to my own salvation?

### *Second Question*

There are very few good confessors in ...

Does charity oblige me not to refuse persons of the opposite sex who present themselves for confession? Up to now I have limited myself severely, I make myself available to them in the confessional for five hours only in the week, on Saturday mornings. This time is wholly given to those whose confessions I have heard previously. No one else may come. Am I to take two days a week to facilitate access to those who would like to come? I have an extraordinary repugnance to hearing the confessions of women and this repugnance is not based on fear of giving offence to God, for I am not at all troubled in this matter, but it is the bother of spending time on this ministry while I always have many more things to do than I can get through.

substance of the first question comes up in the 11th meditation of the 1814 retreat. However, Eugene speaks here of “establishments founded for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.” So he did not write these notes before 1816 and probably not after 1818 for, at that point, he could no longer ponder “abandoning all exterior ministry ...”

## 141. To his Worship the Mayor of Aix.<sup>15</sup>

*Eugene is not in expectation of man's gratitude but solely heaven's reward.*

January 1817

A moment's thought was enough to assuage and even heal the wound completely. The idea of expecting man's gratitude was too imperfect. The more my heart were satisfied with receiving this kind of compensation, the more this human consolation would diminish the merit of my actions and lessen perhaps the reward I look to in heaven. My hope on the contrary is that the latter recompense which is my sole goal will increase in proportion to man's ingratitude. It is my sweetest consolation amid the annoyances I am experiencing and one which, it seems to me, I should have been spared. All the same, my dear friend, be persuaded that what is happening to me through a source close to you does not diminish in any way the esteem due you and the special affection I have expressed in your regard; but it squared with the well-known frankness of my character to open my heart to you in this situation. I trust you will not take it badly ... I remain Sir ready to offer you unequivocal proofs of my constant friendship.

<sup>15</sup> Copy: Ms. Yenveux V, 256. The addressee, date and motivation of this letter are uncertain. The Mayor of Aix at that time was Mr. Dubourguet whom the Founder knew (Rey I, 175) but not as somebody he could address familiarly as in this letter. In 1816-1817 Father de Mazenod and the Vicars capitular made efforts to obtain authorization from the government for the Missionaries of Provence, cf. Pierlorz, *Demarches du Fondateur pour obtenir l'autorisation du Gouvernement*, in *Mission OMI* 1958, 87-119. The municipal Council was invited to give its view only in August 1817. It was favourable, but the Mayor's deputy, Dominique Montagne, the father of one of the congregationists, undoubtedly an ally of the Parish Priests of Aix, sent a long personal letter to the Minister of the Interior on September 1, 1817, in which he asked him not to support the Institute which was the cause of division among the Clergy. The Founder seems to allude to this when he writes: "what is happening to me through a source close to you does not diminish in any way the esteem due you ..." On this hypothesis the letter would be dated to the end of 1817 or January 1818.

**142. To Mrs. Roux [-Bonnecourse], daughter-in-law, rue des Dominicaines, n. 34, Marseilles.<sup>16</sup>**

*He asks Mrs. Roux to do some tailoring for the Mission in a spirit of faith, as if she were making Our Lord's tunic.*

L.S.J.C.

Aix, this May 16, 1817

Madame,

I was about to leave for Mouriès<sup>17</sup> when I received the letter you did me the honour of writing; I asked your mother to convey my apologies for the delay in answering, and I was waiting until my arrival back in Aix to thank you and send you the measurements you request.

The small cord is the measure of the over-all height and the long one is the measure of the circumference. Whatever about your claiming to be clumsy, I would be glad if you were to work at least a little at this work with that holy joy, that commitment you would have displayed if you had lived while O.L.J.C. was on earth, and you had been allowed to work on the tunic or cloak that he was to wear. Oh! how admirably the spirit of faith serves to animate, bring to life our every action! With its help everything achieves greatness, even a few stitches with the needle, and eternal rewards are awarded for these little things as for the most heroic of actions.

Be pleased, Madame, etc. ...

Eugene de Mazenod, Missionary Priest

**143. To Father Fortuné de Mazenod, in Palermo.<sup>18</sup>**

*Eugene will help his uncle, named to the see of Marseilles, and outlines for him a plan for an exemplary life.*

[Paris] November 17, 1817

Yes, yes, my dearest uncle, I take all the responsibility on myself, and I beg the Lord not to be harder on me, so far as concerns the personal

<sup>16</sup> Orig.: Marseilles, arch. de l'archevêché.

<sup>17</sup> Mission preached at Mouriès from February 9 to March 15, 1817. The missionaries made a practice of returning to help the parish priests, occasionally, so as to keep up the fervour of the faithful.

<sup>18</sup> Rambert I, 241 and Rey I, 215. During his trip to Paris, from July to November 1817, Eugene succeeded in having his uncle named to the see of Marseilles and wrote him this news

account that I have to render him, than I have to fear from his justice for this new "endorsement." I wish you could begin tomorrow to exercise this great ministry, as your merits would begin all the sooner. Would to God there were many bishops of your quality! But, though in general the choices are good ones, still they will not all be up to your standard. We will take St. Charles, St. Francis de Sales as patrons and models; our house will be a seminary in its regularity; your life, an example to your priests. Every moment of the day will be spent in doing good, guiding and sanctifying your flock. Horror of pomp, love of simplicity, economy so as to have more for the needs of the poor ... and all else that can serve to inspire your goodness of spirit, your excellent heart. How many marvels will flow from such an admirable way of life! The devil has already measured, weighed the extent and effect of all this good; which explains why he sought to place obstacles, and the difficulties he raised which, I hope, will soon be dissipated.

on August 28 and September 16. Bishop Fortuné replied on October 9: "So, my dear nephew, all is consummated. I will obey, since I must, but throwing myself first into the arms of divine Providence, whom I implore to have pity on my extreme need. ... So why, on the brink of my grave, have you *snatched me from my solitude*, where I was sheltered from so many dangers, to launch me onto a stormy sea and one littered with shipwrecks? Did you really reflect on *the awesome responsibility you were taking on yourself before both God and the Church*, and before the King and men? I repeat, I submit albeit in fear and trembling; and if I have the happiness to do some good in the diocese of Marseilles, I will be the most convincing of proofs that the Lord has no need of any of his creatures' talents and can make use, when he likes, of the weakest and vilest instruments to do his holy work and manifest his glory. ... Remember that after God you are my guide and right arm ..."

The President added in his letter of October 27: "It is well for you to know that Fortuné wants to be guided in everything ... by his vicar general Charles Joseph Eugene, to whose instructions he will conform himself. ... He will need all your attentions. He is counting on them absolutely, unreservedly. Already you can see that in his pastoral he has quite definitely not forgotten to mention some dear and respectable rural missionaries, and how they will be sustained, encouraged and defended by him. Their leader will be in a position to do still more good than in the past ..."

#### 144. [Retreat Notes].<sup>19</sup>

*Despite contradictions Eugene must do good in accordance with God's will, while all the time being watchful as to his own progress in the spiritual life. Resolutions.*

1817<sup>20</sup>

If I want to achieve some good, I must see myself as one sent by God on earth to do there all the good it is in my power to do during the time allotted me, and then death will summon me to him who sent me and who will judge me severely on my works. Woe is me if I am found not to have fulfilled my task!

With this thought in mind, I must make haste and get to work, having always God alone in view, and disdaining any notice of human contradictions which, far from discouraging me, should on the contrary stimulate me all the more to pursue my path, since these contradictions were foretold and are the hall-mark of God's works.

So, far from believing that I am over-doing it just because there are some who criticize and label things falsely, dubbing as "excessive zeal" what is no more than the simple fulfillment of a duty, I will acknowledge I fall short of my obligations and will do more if I can.

But I must not forget that to work efficaciously for others' salvation, I must apply myself very seriously to my own perfection, and I [p. 2] must take care not to dissipate myself while consecrating myself to the service of my neighbour. I will make it an irrevocable rule of conduct that nothing on this earth shall constitute an habitual threat to my own progress in the spiritual life.

For this I must establish some key points as pivots of the rest of my life.

1. To live in great dependence on God and follow in everything I can the rule of the house so as to set an example and subjugate my will.

<sup>19</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-2.

<sup>20</sup> Undated notes. We propose 1817 since, according to the text, Eugene is living in community (so after 1815) and is exposed to contradictions. Now it is in 1817 that the difficulties with the parish priests of Aix were at their height. Lastly we find the substance of the reflections and resolutions in the two retreats of 1818.

2. Since my outside affairs often deflect me and made it impossible for me to follow this rule in every detail, I must make it a special obligation never to dispense myself, on any pretext, from certain of the most essential points of this rule. So, rise with the community, oraison, prepare for and make thanksgiving after Mass. Adore the Blessed Sacrament for at least a quarter of an hour in the afternoon; at least one hour's study during the day, etc., read Holy Scripture.

To this end, there is absolutely no time to waste, and what is left over after the day's business must be well used.

I will never come near it unless I vanish for a few hours during the day.

Rise at 5 o'clock or 4 1/2.

Oraison finishes at 6; from 6 to 10 I must vanish.

In the week I am on the last Mass, enter the church at [p. 3] ten o'clock, prepare, etc.

It ought to be possible to put off all interviews until after dinner. Then read, Holy Scripture until 7 o'clock, theology until 8, correspondence or write until 10.

Perform all of my actions before God without losing for an instant his holy presence, be very careful to offer him all the upset plans my service of neighbour occasions.

But in imitation of the saints, have a love of mortification and the spirit of mortification. Be guided in this matter by my director and do not fall into any extreme either of excess or deficiency.

[p. 4] Sundays, all for the congregation. If there is a moment, reading of Holy Scripture.



## 145. Retreat, [made in Aix,] in May 1818.<sup>21</sup>

*Need for a retreat in a life overcrowded with tasks. Desire for holiness by making the religious vows. Service of neighbour does not exempt from obligations towards God. Eugene has more attraction to prayer than to action; he will ask his Director if he may lead a more penitential life. Necessity of mortifying one's own will, natural vivacity, the overly-sensitive affections of his heart. Bodily mortifications. Resolutions.*

May 1818

It was high time I thought of extricating myself from that innumerable throng of tasks of every kind that overwhelms me spiritually and physically and came on retreat to apply myself seriously in the matter of my salvation by carefully going over all my actions and passing severe judgment on them on the scales of the sanctuary before I must render my account to the Sovereign Judge. The need was pressing as my spirit is so confined, my heart so empty of God that the exterior cares of my ministry, which throw me into continual dependence on others, preoccupy me to such an extent that I have come to the point of no longer having any of that interiority which previously constituted my consolation and happiness, although I have never possessed it other than very imperfectly because of my infidelities and constant imperfection. I function as a mere machine in everything that concerns me personally. It seems I am no longer capable of thinking once it touches me personally. In that case what good can I do for others? This way a thousand imperfections creep into my regular relations with my neighbour and make me lose perhaps all the merit of a life entirely consecrated to his service.

I have good reason to be alarmed at this state of affairs; I've been aware of it for some time without being able yet to do anything about it. Today with God's help I am going to work carefully at it and put such order into my actions that each item may reassume its place and love of neighbour may not be a reason for me to fail in the love I owe myself, all the more since the best means of being really useful to one's neighbour is without doubt to work much on oneself.

I am horrified at the state I am in. It seems I only love God by fits and starts. For the rest, I pray badly, meditate badly, prepare to say holy Mass

<sup>21</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-3. This retreat was made at the end of April and first days of May, cf. Eugene to Mrs. Roux-Bonnetcorse, May 2, 1818.

badly, say it badly, make my thanksgiving badly; in everything I have a sense of repugnance to recollecting myself although my experience is that once I have surmounted this first difficulty I rejoice in the presence of God. All these [p. 2] disorders proceed, I think, from the fact that I am overly-involved in exterior works, and also from the fact that I am not careful enough to do them with great purity of heart.

I have just read over the reflections I made in July 1816. I was surprised at their accuracy, and I dare say edified by the sentiments they contain, but if I did not amount to much then, I am now worth a lot less still.

Affairs, difficulties, far from diminishing have just gone on multiplying since then, and thanks to failing to read over these fine resolutions grace inspired me with, I have not carried them out. So I do not find any more within me that sweet sense of security that is so well expressed in those reflections, which I have read over twice with genuine pleasure.

The state I find myself in is an extraordinary one and calls for prompt treatment. It consists in an absolute apathy to all that concerns me directly; it seems that when I ought to move on from service of neighbour to consideration of myself, it seems I say that I have no more energy, I am completely exhausted, dried up, unable even to think.

I repent of this fatal disposition even at this moment and never have I suffered such difficulties, such distress in recollecting myself, in entering into myself, in thinking of the eternal truths, etc.

However, for some time now, the thought of death has become more familiar to me than ever, but I have not gone more deeply into it, drawn any practical conclusion. In all truth I can almost say I have simply not had the time. Which is why I must regulate in a way that is definitive, firm, efficacious the principal actions from which I must no longer dispense myself on any pretext whatsoever. So, for example, why should I any longer put up with person after person making me take up all my prayer time for confessions, etc.

My God! Who can doubt you are the master of hearts? Just see! I feel I am so different today from what I was yesterday! and this without my making the least effort, with no spiritual tussle, etc. [p. 3]. 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 Alphonsus di 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. ...

I felt the need of leading a still more mortified life and I ardently desired to do it. One thing alone distressed me and that is the fear that it will meet with opposition and my Director will take advantage of the vow of obedience I have made to him to put obstacles to what seems to me evidently God's will. I cast about seriously for the means to escape the too-pressing attentions that charity suggests to some who are overly-afraid I will fall ill once again. I was indignant to have such a fuss made over me while I know full well that I am good for nothing, and that the little good I have done, I have done because God in his goodness was pushing me by the shoulders.

All these feelings were not fleeting, I retain them and adopt them afresh at the moment I am recounting them and writing them down. So what is all this? Have I not saddened the Holy Spirit hitherto by not responding to what he wished of me? May it be so no longer: speak Lord, your servant heareth: show me, I beg you, the way that I should go, enlighten me with your light, give me the understanding to know your will and walk in the ways of your commandments. This attraction towards a perfection of which I see no models around 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 [p. 4] 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.

To be clear, the lights God gives me in his goodness today are no proof I was mistaken yesterday, quite the contrary. The one confirms the other.

God forbid that I would want to give up the service of neighbour! Far from it! I would like, if it were possible, to do still more for him than I have done hitherto, since without doubt the Lord is glorified by it, precisely as

it pleases Him to be more so, but I will be better advised, and in serving my neighbour I will no longer forget myself as I have done; I will not persuade myself so easily that the exercise of charity towards him can take the place of everything, serve as my meditation, preparation, thanksgiving, visit to the Blessed Sacrament, prayer, etc. That is an excess that threw me into the state I saw myself in yesterday. It will not be an easy thing to change. God knows that if I give myself up to exterior works, there is more of duty than of liking in it, it is obeying what I believe the Master demands of me; that is so true that I always do it with an extreme repugnance from my lower nature. If I followed my taste, I would attend solely to myself and content myself with praying for others. I would spend my life in study and prayer. But who am I to have a will of my own in this respect? It belongs to the Father of the Family to fix the kind of work it pleases him to have his workers do. They are always too honoured and too happy to be chosen to cultivate his vineyard.

The essential thing is to combine things in such wise that nothing suffers, and that in service of neighbour I do not forget myself to the point of becoming tepid.

I could not prescribe myself anything better for avoiding that setback than what I wrote in my Bonneveine resolutions in 1816. I will bring my conduct into line with that, and so as to have them always before me I will go over them in the day's retreat each month which I make the resolution once again to observe scrupulously.

Only, since I remark that my health is better since Holy Week, that my chest is not hurting any longer, etc., I will plead with my Director to let me follow the attraction that pulls me strongly to lead a penitential life [p.5]. I believe it would be to go against the spirit of God to try to resist this any longer, on the pretext that my health needs attention.

I must do penance because I am a very great sinner, I must do penance to draw upon myself and those under my direction the blessings of the Lord, to keep me in the spirit of compunction, etc., to give others an example of mortification, to offer God some feeble compensation for the penance due to the sins of those I reconciled without requiring of them a satisfaction in proportion to their crimes. Finally, a thousand other reasons aside, to subdue my body in this happy servitude which should bring it into subjection to the spirit, etc.

This penance should consist in the first place in the interior mortification of the will by obliging it to conform itself in everything to God's good

pleasure, cost what it will to that rebel who is ever casting about for the opportunity to evade it. So, when some unforeseen accident or, which amounts to the same thing, man's malice places some obstacle to my conscientious plans, calumniates my intentions, etc., my will — perceiving in these obstacles, persecutions, God's permission, — after I have done everything prudence and wisdom demand for success, — this will will peacefully submit and be quiet, without me permitting myself the least murmur, nor the least recrimination.<sup>22</sup>

I will be on guard against my natural vivacity, and I will do everything on my part to stifle the indignation that certain types of behaviour arouse in me which wound my sensitivity or are repugnant to natural equity, of which the Lord has given me a heightened sense. Mortification shall be all the more meritorious therefrom.

If I must be vigilant over feelings which do not emanate from an evil source, all the more must I repress those that find their source in pride or some other insufficiently curbed passion; so, when someone treats me with indifference, is lacking in the respect I might think, in worldly terms, to be my due, even if it extends to insulting behaviour, etc., it is essential, indispensable, that I endure it meekly. It would be desirable if it actually became *an occasion for rejoicing*. [p. 6] It is not enough to have no rancour, to pardon freely, to forget offenses, even to make approaches to those who have been the most insulting towards me, dispositions that are habitual to me and that I follow at the moment of testing; but one must repress too that first movement aroused by pride; one must not yield for a single moment to the indignation that those types of behaviour awaken in the depths of my heart, the scorn they inspire towards those who cause them.

I must also regulate and master more the all too feeling and loving affections of my heart; at least I have to succeed in making less display of the feelings that the well-known friendship of a small number of persons inspires me with and who really deserve to be repaid in the same coin. I am speaking here only of men, for as to women, the reserve that the holiness of my state of life demands of me, and the rules of strictest modesty that I am not aware of having ever violated, do not leave me any uneasiness, and

<sup>22</sup> Eugene wrote in the margin: St. Francis Xavier used to say to everybody: *Vince te ipsum*. St. Bernard: *Cesset propria voluntas et infernus non erit*. The same saint: *Grande malum propria voluntas, qua fit ut bona tua tibi bona non sint*. The same saint: *Unde turbatio nisi quia propriam voluntatem sequimur*.

in consequence there is no call for rules in this area, otherwise than to continue to act always with the same circumspection and purity of thought and deed as I have done up to the present.

It is not the same where men are concerned; I am too readily effusive with those who love me and since I cannot prevent myself loving them in return, and although to be frank, I love only those who are virtuous and in proportion to what virtues they have, even so I cannot pretend otherwise than that this feeling, although founded on virtue, is too human a thing on my side, too conformed to that natural attraction which has always led me both to bestow love in good measure on people by whom I believe I am loved, and to be happy to inspire and to see others share this feeling which is very highly instinctual in me.

And although this affection is, as it ought to be, subordinated to the love I owe God, am I not stealing from this sovereign Master of hearts, who has given me mine of this temper only to love him the more with, a portion of that perfect love which is due only to him?

[p. 7] What I find reassuring is that I am certain God is the chief bond of that union, since what consoles me the most in my friendships is seeing my friends virtuous, as my great joy is to see them do some fine thing, and also that the mere thought that they could be untrue to themselves and stray the least bit from the good road they are following, would deeply wound me. In that same love it is true I am happy too to see them succeed in their endeavours, earning the esteem and praise of worthy men, etc.

I should add that most of them owe their success to my efforts, and their love of virtue to my solicitude. But never the less, I believe my fault is that of a father who loves his children too much, all things considered, since for the youngest of my friends, I think that is the kind of love I bear towards them.

It would without a doubt be more perfect to love absolutely no one but God; but to reach that state, I believe I would have to love no longer among men.

I believe I must be satisfied with being vigilant over myself so as to love only for God, and in dependence on God, those who are worthy of being loved on account of their virtues and good qualities, paying the strictest attention lest anything too human come in to spoil a feeling that, contained within just limits, can certainly receive the approval of piety, the most scrupulous piety.

The essential thing is to yield nothing to sense or to nature; so I must stay strictly clear of all familiarity, rarely permitting an embrace from anyone, still without carrying this reserve to the point of affectation in anyone's regard, as there are so many with access to me.

That is enough of that, I have already said too much even as it is.

As to bodily mortifications, I should get permission to fast now and again over and above Friday, to use the discipline as I used to formerly, to wear an iron chain as I notice the hair shirt tires me and in particular greatly heats up my blood when I keep it on all day. Besides, it is a great bother to take it off during the course of the day.

But what I would really like would be to sleep [p. 8] on a pallet still clothed in my soutane. I have always felt great repugnance to taking it off to go to bed. Why should I not do what is prescribed in so many religious orders?

I believe the rigorous observance of our Rule concerning meals can be counted in the list of bodily mortifications. Never eat outside mealtimes, eat only dry bread at breakfast, be satisfied with the frugal fare of the community, taking care never to correct the oversights of the cook when the soup or vegetables are tasteless for want of salt, etc., keep on giving the example I want observed of never permitting oneself to eat outside the house except under obedience at the Archbishop's table.

## **146. Summary of the resolutions made during the week I spent on retreat in Bonneveine, for health reasons, in July 1816.**

[May 1818]<sup>23</sup>

In my private life

### *Prayer*

Apply myself more to oraison. Never eliminate it, be very slow to postpone it, shorten it but rarely.

<sup>23</sup> This summary, according to the context of the notes that precede and follow, was probably made during the May 1818 Retreat. Eugene was writing on a smaller sheet of paper but, it seems, with the same fine-nibbed pen.

On the contrary, try if possible to add to the morning period a private one after dinner before the Blessed Sacrament.

Prepare for each of these prayer periods, and dwell a lot on humility, the spirit of faith and interiority in all I do, on meekness, charity and service of neighbour; on patience in contradictions, perfect dependence on God; on the example of the saints, something that makes a big impression on me and brings me so forcibly to God; on the example I am bound to give others, the account God will ask of me for the regularity and fervour that I do not win by my example; on mistrust of self, my virtues — I haven't any — my lights — they are very short-lived; on trust in God — it should be boundless, on abandonment to his way and spirit; on [p. 2] love of the hidden life, the means I must take for my salvation while working for that of others, on purity of heart, freedom of spirit, detachment from creatures.

### *Mass*

Keep on saying Mass every day but do not delay in correcting the abuse that has crept into my preparations and thanksgivings.

Too often I judge myself obliged to dispense myself or to shorten them out of charity to neighbour. If it were once in a while, well and good, but it is happening too frequently to be any longer excusable. Outside unforeseen and abnormal situations, I will no longer dispense myself from doing either of these important things on which depends normally the fruit one derives from the holy Sacrifice.

Let my neighbour be patient, if he wishes, but he does not have the right to demand my service at the price of so great a loss to my soul.

I will make my thanksgiving before the Blessed Sacrament after changing into my surplice.

And I will be very attentive not to allow myself to be stopped in the sacristy. It must be established practice not to address me, outside an urgent case, before I have made my thanksgiving; I must stick to my regulation on this matter as well as on the rest. We will get there in the end and be edified [p. 3].

### *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament*

My needs have increased in proportion to my duties, to whom shall I go to perform my responsibilities as I should? To no one else than the divine Master who imposed them on me; so, over and above the visit required by rule to which I will be most faithful, and which I will anticipate if I foresee I will not be able to make it with the community, I will



present myself frequently at the feet of J.C., even if it is only for a few moments, but I will never appear in his presence without the greatest respect, even exterior, in such wise that at times the church is empty, both on arrival and on departure, I will prostrate myself face to the ground; I will try to introduce this solid practice to others, etc.

### *Divine Office*

I will be more regular as to my Office and say it better. I will do my best to anticipate Matins and Lauds and say them before the Blessed Sacrament. I will never begin without a moment's recollection to direct my intention and fix my mind. I will say it with more composure, and especially more prayerfully. I will place in my breviary the Ordo page so as not to risk leaving out any part of what is prescribed.

After finishing each part, I will be still for a moment in silence and, in a state of recollection, I will offer this prayer to God; I will briefly examine where I have been lax, abase myself and ask God's pardon, with a purpose of amendment. I will be watchful to say the Office at the proper times.

### *Confession*

I will go to confession at least every eight days, and I will prepare, watch in hand, for 20 minutes at most, not less than a quarter-hour. As to method I will go by the regulation [p. 4].

### *Examination of conscience*

A little more fidelity to my examination of conscience. Without it, it is impossible to keep my accounts in order. The first before dinner, the second at the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, the third, in the evening, all according to the method in my regulation.

### *Actions in general*

In all my actions in general, less impulse, more interiority, less anxiety.

### *Penance*

So am I reduced to not doing any? Let's have another try with my Director, at least to sleep on boards on Fridays.

### *Retreat*

One day a month, over and above the annual one, i.e., I will use this day, which comes on the first free day of the month, for meditation, examen, and prayer whenever the obligations of my office leave me free.

## In my community life

### *Community exercises*

Since all outside business ends up in my lap, my plans are often upset, and I find I cannot always follow the community exercises at the time fixed. I must pay particular attention to be absent from these exercises only when it cannot be helped. Cut down on the conversations, speed them up, put them off. Examine myself every day to see if I have been at fault or negligent. Big efforts to make these infractions of the Rules as rare as possible. Far from looking for opportunities, avoid them with the greatest care.

### *Silence*

Keep the silence as to time and place, make it my duty to set an example. Break it only by necessity.

### With my brothers

### *Meekness*

Accord infinite respect to my confreres. Address them in a very meek and forbearing way.

### *Tolerance*

Repress absolutely and totally those first movements [p. 5] of impatience, petty acts of bluntness occasioned, it is true, very often by others' faults, but which all the same should be corrected with very great care. Put up with the faults of others with charity.

### *Firmness*

At the same time assume responsibility for picking up on them when necessary and at the right moment. I accuse myself of weakness in this matter, the forbearance I have shown up to now is not of God; it is all too human, and inspired by an all too natural prudence, at least not supernatural enough. Why be afraid of offending. One must act for God and under God. Whatever happens.

### *With the congregationists*

Put up more resistance to their attentions, be always amiable and kind towards them. These are the ways I win them over to God, but still avoid too much familiarity.

Scold them rarely and never be brusque with them. Pray much for them. Offer God the good they do. Do a lot of reflection on how to behave with them and on where they are at.

Every day, for them and for the house, say:

*Custodi nos Domine ut pupillam oculi, etc.*

*Visita quaesumus Domine*

*Dignare me laudare te Virgo Sacrata, etc.*

*Defende, et Deus qui in Cruce moriens*

*Angele Die, Gloria Patri.*

I will say these prayers at thanksgiving for Mass. [p. 6]

My rigour as to the house regulation must go to the point of scrupulosity when I can follow it, it is the law, the penance God lays on me.

It must extend to body-care since it must be fit for work.

So I will always retire at ten o'clock. I will take my meals like everybody else. As I am often disturbed, it is absolutely vital there should be certain times in the day when no one may see me.

I see hardly any alternative for this than from 3 to 6:30, the time for spiritual reading, but alas, will I not be often obliged to go out at those times?

In my relations with neighbour, apart from the community.

They must always be subordinate to obligations I have to fulfill as head of the house of the Mission and responsible for youth.

I am primarily my brothers' servant, and my children's, then everyone's.

So I will no longer allow myself to give way to that extreme repugnance that I have to go to the confessional, I will make it an object of special care not to let it be so apparent. Women too have to go to confession and have need of help to work out their salvation. Keep to the [p. 7] days I have fixed, but on those days go with the same joy as to my other exercises, for such is the will of God.

It would perhaps be more perfect to welcome all those ladies who present themselves.

The youth congregation could suffer because I do not attend sufficiently to administration. I will devote to this occupation all the free time left after the congregationists' confessions on Thursdays.

Mondays I will work on missions.

Tuesdays the temporal affairs of the house, either with the bursar or with people from outside.

Wednesday mornings, women's confessions.

Thursdays for the confessions and instruction of the youth.

Fridays correspondence.

Saturday mornings, women's confession. After dinner, confessions of young people.

Sunday mornings, confessions, youth gatherings, church service.

Less severity towards my mother, more considerate to do everything I can not to upset her provided order, regularity, the spirit of mortification do not suffer. I must try to dissuade her from the idea that I want to kill myself.

\* \* \*

[p. 8] **Supplement to the rules I approved in May 1818**

*Every day:*

Over and above what is said opposite, apart from days set aside for the congregation or confessions, I will make myself invisible the whole morning by going to the top room in the house where I am for this retreat, from my Mass until particular examen. I will do the same after dinner for at least two hours. I will try to observe the silence during all these times.

|                |       |         |                                     |      |         |
|----------------|-------|---------|-------------------------------------|------|---------|
| Mass           | 6     | o'clock | Vespers, compline                   | 2:15 | o'clock |
| Holy Scripture | 7     | "       | Correspondence,                     |      |         |
| Prime, tierce  | 7:30  | "       | Congreg. or house                   |      |         |
| Breakfast      |       |         | business                            | 2:30 | "       |
| Sext, None     | 8     | "       | Reading, theology                   |      |         |
| Theology       | 8:15  | "       | notes, etc.                         | 4    | "       |
| Reading, notes |       |         | Matins, lauds                       | 6    | "       |
| etc.           | 10    | "       | Adoration                           | 6:30 | "       |
| Available in   |       |         | and spir. reading                   |      |         |
| my room        | 11    | "       | with the community                  | 7    | "       |
| Partic. exam.  | 11:45 | "       | When I have to go out I will try to |      |         |
| Rosary         | 2     | "       | do it after dinner.                 |      |         |

*Every week:*

Friday fast

Confession twice

Discipline Friday

*Every month:*

Retreat first free day of the month

*Every year:*

Retreat of eight or ten days. Day's retreat before and after each mission.

## **147. Journal ... of the Christian Youth Association founded in Aix. ...<sup>24</sup>**

*Insult received in Aix because of his work on behalf of youth.*

June 23, 1818

[p. 43] Here a lacuna opens up [of 28 months] which lasts up to June 18, 1818, when I resolved to recommence a work my tasks had obliged me to interrupt, in spite of my goodwill. ... I assigned a congregationist to make a note of the principle events so that at the first free moment I might write them up and transcribe them, but the notes were made very poorly, with the result that today, June 23, 1818, I have practically no document on all that has happened in the last two and a half years, and yet it is a time replete with interesting happenings. The congregation took [p. 44] so to speak a new form, at least its regulation and administration were considerably improved in the light of experience and new methods I had to achieve results. Obstacles and contradictions also increased in proportion, but the arm of the ever and infinitely merciful Lord has not grown shorter over those whose only end in all their endeavours, all their operation, was his greater glory, the building up of the Church and the salvation of the souls whom he redeemed with his blood, and the obstacles and contradictions served only to give more strength to a work he protects and which, it seems, should have had as its only adversaries none except impious and bad Christians. Even so my patience was cruelly tried, and it took nothing short of the conviction of the good being done in the congregation through a felt and daily working of grace, and the certainty of the ravage that the enemy of our souls would have wrought in this chosen flock, if I had abandoned it, to hold me back from renouncing it permanently or even from never wanting to do the least good ever again in a town for which I had

<sup>24</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM VIII-2a, pp. 43-44.

sacrificed myself and where I had been made to drink the cup of bitterness. The congregationists should know that the only insult<sup>25</sup> I ever received in my life was on their account and because of trying to be of help to them, and that I have never had such sources of annoyance as over them. But they should know too, for their edification, that I forgave the insult on the spot, and that I still endure the sources of annoyance with patience and resignation in view of pleasing God, and as an expiation of the faults I commit every day by not fulfilling perfectly enough the task the Lord imposed on me in their regard. Thus it is so as not to abandon them that I continued my ministry to them despite the hindrances put in its way and persecutions aroused against me in this matter, and I experience too much consolation in being able to tell them I sacrificed for their benefit extremely advantageous and beguiling offers<sup>26</sup> to withhold confiding this to them in the hope that they will compensate me by their perseverance in God's service and their attachment to the congregation. ...

#### 148. Day's Retreat, during the community retreat.<sup>27</sup>

*Preparation for oblation. The fervour and holiness of his community and the faithful depend on his personal holiness. God's will is clear, Eugene cannot renounce ministering to others and live in solitude. Fear of death. Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Examination of conscience. Resolutions: presence of God, prayer, mortification of his sensitivity, etc.*

October 30, 1818

On the eve of engaging myself in a great commitment for the rest of my days, I enter into myself to humble myself before God for the small progress I have made in the ways of perfection, bitterly to lament the difficulty I am experiencing in getting out of the habitual state of tepidity I have fallen into since my duty has obliged me to focus my attention on others and I have been almost entirely forgetful of myself.

<sup>25</sup> The perpetrator of the insult was Father Christine, in the cathedral, during confirmations on May 18, 1817: cf. Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, (Tr. F.D. Flanagan, O.M.I.) 4 vols., Fordham U.P. New York, 1961-70, II, pp. 53ff. On the "contradictions," see Pierlorz, *Les rapports du Fondateur avec les Cures d'Aix (1813-1826)* in *Etudes Oblates* 19 (1960) 147-171, 328-367, 20 (1961) 39-60.

<sup>26</sup> Refusal to accept nomination as vicar general of Chartres, at the time of his trip to Paris in July-November 1817: cf. *Journal Mazenod*, August 31, 1847.

<sup>27</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-3.

In the forefront of my mind is the thought of death and the awesome account to be rendered to God for so many graces he has given me and which I have abused and still do so every day.

It is not without fear that I consider the enormous obligations the Lord imposed on me when he assigned me so extensive and important a ministry.

To think of it! 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. If on the contrary I am lazy, the community will thereby suffer a great loss, and the people will be the victims, and since it was my duty to bring down on both the former and the latter an infinity of graces of perfection or conversion, on the day of judgment they will all rise up against me to ask for an account of the treasure I deprived them of by my fault.

I confess that this thought is so terrifying that I would have been tempted to succumb to discouragement and renounce working for others' salvation. But I became convinced that this was not the surest approach, since as the Lord has shown me his will both through the voice of superiors and by the successful results with which, notwithstanding so many obstacles and oppositions, he crowned all the works he assigned me, I would not escape the condemnation I fear by fleeing the field and returning to the peace and quiet I yearn for.

So what is the alternative? I must go on entirely renouncing my preferences which would lead me to a life of retreat, devoted principally to study and like pursuits of a solitary life; let me devote myself anew and forever to my neighbour's service, but with less neglect of myself, let me be more watchful over my inner self, and not let myself get entirely absorbed by works of exterior zeal, i.e., in a word, let me work at one and the same time both for the salvation of others and for my own sanctification.

I have often asked myself, whence the block to my correcting myself [p. 2], to my improvement? My God, the fault is mine alone, for your grace never ceases to go before me, to stimulate me, and is ever my companion. Lord, make me more docile to following its promptings, more attentive to hearing its inspirations, more faithful in putting into practice the resolutions it dictates. Virgin Mary, my darling Mother, if I invoked you more often, I would not have so much cause for lament. Be my help, O my

Mother, by your powerful intercession, to perform all the duties your dear Son has imposed on me in a different way than I have up to now, so that by our help I may find my reward in carrying them out as I should and, after their accomplishment, a greater reward still in heaven whither I beg you to draw me when I am less unworthy of entering in there.

I put the question to myself today, what is it gives me most interior pain?

1. There seems to be within my conscience a certain obscurity which could be a problem for me at the hour of my death. I go to confession often. It seems that although I accuse myself of what matter I have for reproach, and despite that, one would say I have a fear that all my faults, infidelities, etc., stay in my heart and form there a kind of dross that is always weighing me down.

2. I cannot explain why I am afraid of death, whether it is simply the natural horror that the thought of our destruction inspires, or rather whether it is fear that God's judgment will not be favourable to me. How often I have left the bedside of the sick whom I have visited confounded. That perfect resignation, peaceful assurance with which they saw their end approaching, those holy desires which make them impatient even of the few moments that remain to them to live, all that both astonishes and humiliates me at the same time.

So what is my attachment to life? I simply do not know. It is true I am too fond of creatures, too sensitive to their love for me, that I love them over-much in return for their feelings towards me; even so I recognize that it is not in that lies my fear of death to the point of avoiding thinking deeply about it.

So what is it? I simply do not know, I say again. It is always true [p. 3] that I do not love God enough, for if I loved him more, I would suffer from not being able to possess him. It is true also that I do not often enough raise my thoughts to heaven. I usually stop at, and try to show love for, Jesus Christ dwelling among us in his Sacrament, and I do not leave this place, I do not raise myself up higher; he is there, that is enough for my weakness, — I do not say for my love because, although I would really like to love him, I do not love him much, I love him little. So coarse am I that I do not form for myself any idea of heaven, nor of God. I stop always at Jesus Christ who is there and I make no effort at all to seek him out elsewhere, were it even in his Father's bosom. That's where I am at. My God, give me more light. But I do not want to stop loving, blessing, thanking, conversing with Jesus Christ in his Sacrament dwelling in our midst. The



rest will be extra, if God wills it, but that I must have, I know my needs, at least that one.

But let me put these ideas aside for a moment. Today I want to dig deeper into the inmost depths of my heart to seek out all my sins, confessed or not, I want to accuse myself of them again with feelings of sincere regret for committing them. Simply, to acknowledge my faults as if I must die this very evening, and everything else that follows. Lord, enlighten me in this search, but especially make me feel my ingratitude, the baneful consequences of my blindness and laxity, convert me, yes, Lord, convert me and give me the grace, so little merited, to persevere until death in your love, and to possess you eternally in heaven.

I will conduct a thorough search for all my faults, accuse myself of them humbly and in confusion, I will ask God to fill me with regret for committing so many sins despite his infinite kindnesses towards me, detest my ingratitude, but then I must not stop there. I will take the greatest care not to fall again into the same faults. To reach this point:

1. I will renew myself in the practice of the exercise of the presence of God that I have forgotten all too often. Being busy is not a valid excuse [p. 4].

2. I will devote myself to oraison and not let myself be interrupted any more be it for confessing or anything else. I will prepare the subject attentively, and be on the lookout for distractions, etc.

3. Having acknowledged that my heart is for ever reproaching itself for its over-sensitivity to the love shown me by men who have the greatest right to my affection and thanks, I will be ever watchful over myself so as not to yield anything excessive to nature, to go against it even and do battle with it and the attraction that leads it always to reveal in external acts the sensitivity of my over-loving soul. The cost to me is enormous when I bring grief in this way to those who love me and restrain the expression of the feelings which move me and for which I would be even sometimes tempted to pride, but the sacrifice will consequently be all the more meritorious, and God will make himself responsible for compensating me.

4. I will make it a rule never to be disturbed during my thanksgiving, which up to now is happening all too often.

5. I will make it an invariable rule to come and visit the Blessed Sacrament in the afternoon or evening independently of the visit prescribed by the Rule.

## 149. Oblation Formula<sup>28</sup>

*Vows of chastity, obedience, and perseverance in the society of Missionaries of Provence.*

Aix, November 1, 1818

In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of the Most Holy Trinity, the Blessed Virgin Mary, all the Angels and all the Saints, all my brothers here assembled, I, Charles Joseph Eugene de Mazenod, profess, promise to God and vow perpetual chastity and obedience; I swear and likewise vow to persevere until death in the holy institute and society of the Missionaries known as Missionaries of Provence. So help me God.

Eugene de Mazenod  
missionary priest

## 150. Evangelical Poverty.<sup>29</sup>

*Meaning of evangelical poverty according to St. Clement of Alexandria; demands of religious poverty; some saintly examples.*

[1818-1821].<sup>30</sup>

It is more important than many realize to have exact and sensible ideas, to examine carefully propositions that have more than one sense, reflect on a passage to ascertain the author's intention above all when it is a question of a precept to be observed or a counsel to follow, so as not to fall into the mistake St. Paul warns us about of following more the letter that kills than the spirit that gives life. Scorn or desire for riches has often been the subject of my conversations with certain of my acquaintances and every time my opinions on the topic have been not just different from but entirely opposed to theirs. The only basis for their continual opposition were certain texts from the Gospel which I held should be understood in a sense different from that which they present at first to the mind. I

<sup>28</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IX-1; we still have as well the original oblation formula made November 1, 1824, and which includes the vow of poverty.

<sup>29</sup> Orig.: arch. de la Post. DM IV-7.

<sup>30</sup> Two undated sheets, written no doubt at different times as the handwriting changes three times. We suggest 1818-1821, when Father de Mazenod introduced vows into the Congregation. They seem to be notes taken while reading.

remember citing them in proof of my position that one had often to rise above the letter (clearly when the Church or tradition authorize it), the passage from the Gospel where it says to hate your father, for certainly J.C. did not mean us to hate our father; so one has to look for another meaning.

But since it often happens that the best of arguments make little impression when they are not put forward by some respectable authority, which should not be the case, I find very apt the treatment of this same topic by Father Fleury in his 8th Discourse on Church History and I make use of it to convince those who will not yield before the evidence:

“This would be the place, he says (P. XIII, t. XX.), to treat in depth the question of evangelical poverty, and we could not in this research follow a better guide than St. Clement of Alexandria, who was taught by the Disciples of the Apostles. He wrote a tract on this question: Who is the rich man who will be saved? in which he reasons in this fashion (comb. auct. bibl. P. P. p. 163). Riches are in themselves neutral, like strength and bodily beauty, they are instruments that can be used well or ill, and a kind of property. Temporal goods, the abundance of which constitutes riches, are the necessary material for many of the good works prescribed by J.C. If he ordered all the faithful to abandon them, he would be contradicting himself; and in fact he gives no such order to Zaccheus (Luke 19:5), he is happy enough that he keeps back a half. Contrary to this, extreme poverty is an evil in itself rather than a good: it is an obstacle to virtue and a source of many violent temptations, injustice, corruption, impudence, laziness, discouragement, despair. This is why Scripture says: Give me neither riches nor poverty (Prov. 30:8). One must not therefore understand crudely the precept to sell all one’s goods, no more than that to hate one’s father. How could J.C. order us to positively hate him, when he is the one who tells us to love even our enemies? He only wants us to understand by this very strong expression that we must not prefer the persons who are most dear to us to God, but leave them when need arises, to join ourselves to him. So when he tells us to renounce riches, he is obliging us only to do battle with the passions that they naturally excite, pride, contempt of the poor, love of sensual pleasures, desire to enrich oneself endlessly (which degenerates into avarice) and other like things. A rich person who uses well his riches and is always ready to lose them like Job, without a murmur, is one truly poor in spirit. Such are the maxims of this great Doctor of the Church’s second century, far above the sophistries of modern scholasticism.”

These ideas of St. Clement on poverty and riches, adopted by Fleury, have always been my own. I have always believed that the anathema laid

by J.C. on riches is to be understood only of those who do not possess riches but are possessed by them, who make an idol of their money and place in it all their hopes and who use them only abusively, denying the poor man the help he has a right to demand, and making criminal use of what should be poured into the bosom of the indigent, or ...

### *Poverty*

A religious should not keep anything without the knowledge of his superior.

St. Ignatius called holy poverty the highway of religion. St. Francis of Assisi, according to the testimony of St. Bonaventure, called it sometimes his mother, sometimes his mistress and queen; he bore it so deeply graven on his heart, that when he was invited to some meal, first he would go and beg some pieces of bread and place them on the table to season his meal with them; he used to say that without the seasoning of poverty he found all food insipid. It is believed that the holy Apostles made a vow of poverty and at their example the first faithful did likewise; selling their goods, they brought the money to the Apostles to have everything in common.

In general poverty is a virtue that brings a person to despise riches and temporal goods as things vain and empty by comparison with supernatural and eternal goods. Poverty so considered befits every Christian since the Gospel forbids one to attach oneself affectively or factually to riches in such a way that those who possess them, if they prefer them to the observance of the commandments, are excluded from the Kingdom of heaven. But religious poverty goes further, for it does not only despise transitory goods but it gives them up as well so as to deprive itself of them even as regards the hope itself of having any in the future, making itself incapable of acquiring any ownership and property by a special vow. In this way it casts off impediments and obstacles to salvation, like a traveler who wishing to journey more quickly lays aside the load which was serving only to slow him down on his journey.

But why does the Sage ask God for the middle state between poverty and riches? I reply that this was the request proportionate to the men of that time, carnal still and earthly under the law of fear, but under the law of grace we do not fear to ask for holy poverty. So the first means to acquire holy religious poverty is a continual and fervent prayer. The second means is to consider attentively Our Lord J.C. as model and reward of poverty. And first as our model in his birth, in his life, and in his death. The stable of Bethlehem — could it be more poor, deprived, bereft of all furniture? ...

In his life the work of his hands provided his sustenance and when, in the last three years of his life, he was taken up with preaching, the alms of the faithful sustained him. Isn't it he who tells the young man who wanted to come and follow him, for fear that the hope of temporal gain were what was attracting him to follow: foxes have their lairs and the birds of heaven their nests, but the son of man does not own a single place to lay down his head. Jesus began his first sermon on the Mount of Beatitudes with poverty: "Blessed are the poor in spirit for the kingdom of heaven is theirs." He said "is" not "will be" to show that it already belongs to them, having paid the price by the abandonment of everything, like the one who buying some merchandise pays for it while it stays with the seller.<sup>31</sup>

It was for the sake of holy poverty that St. Aloysius Gonzaga was quite unwilling to lend a piece of paper to one of his companions, without having first asked for the superior's permission; and to practice poverty and obedience the better, was not satisfied with a general permission but asked each time the need arose.

Rinaldo, abbot of the convent of St. Dominic in Bologna, having learnt that a lay brother had taken without permission a piece of woolen cloth to repair his habit, confronted him before the whole chapter, reprimanded him severely, and after imposing a severe penance, like one guilty of larceny, burnt the stolen object. It was likewise for the sake of holy poverty that St. Teresa examined from time to time her cell to see that there was nothing superfluous there and to get rid of it. She added even that every time she kept something unnecessary in her cell it gave rise to many distractions during her prayer.

<sup>31</sup> The following four lines are written in Italian: "*Gesu Cristo ha cominciato la sua prima predica sul monte della povertà. 'Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est' ... dice 'est' e non 'erit' per dinotare, che loro già appartiene avendone sborsato il prezzo mediante l'abondono di tutti, come chi comprando una mercanzia dona il prezzo abbenchè la roba rimanga presso il venditore.*"

## 151. To Adolphe Tavernier, in La Bégude.<sup>32</sup>

*Father de Mazenod is a slave in Aix: a visit that tests his patience.  
Love of nature.*

Aix, October 12, 1819

You may extol, my dear Adolf, at your leisure the freedom of the countryside. I could enlarge much longer on the bondage of the town. Enjoy in peace the charming lot that is yours, but allow me to lament all the harshness of that which has fallen to me. So do not look for the smiling images which fill your imagination and which flow so to speak from your pen; I have only what is sombre and boring to give you, so much so it would be better to be silent. Why make people miserable? Yesterday, for example, I was going over your little letter again and was about to answer it when boredom personified came and ensconced himself in my presence rigged out in all his finery; he sat down on my poor sofa as if on his throne, and full of his brand of witticism he made himself so comfortable that he did not budge until nine o'clock. Blessed by that bell which came, alas, too late to rescue me from his terrible blows. Indeed, had it been permissible to let its natural effect to blossom from the cause, I would have fallen fast asleep at the very feet of the throne where I was slumped. But no: my grim task was to do violence to nature and entertain the personage who was slowly killing me. Actually, dear Adolf, is that not worth all the murmuring of your streams, the brilliant beauty of your stars, your fields, trees and birds, and even the beautiful evening under your friendly moon. You should have seen me, your letter in hand as a kind of placet, casting glances at it from time to time as if to beg as a favour that some allowance be made for its just entreaties. "Request denied," replied the barbarian pitilessly, "To your task, O man of law, say something amusing."

But let us leave his boring majesty and go back to your letter. Be sure of this, I am annoyed that I liked it; I cannot forgive myself for finding it

<sup>32</sup> Extract from A.A. Tavernier, *Quelques souvenirs de Mgr C.E. de Mazenod, év. de Marseille*, Aix, 1872, pp. 73-74. Adolf Tavernier was a member of the youth congregation; he became a lawyer. On holiday in La Bégude, he described, on October 11, a walk with his mother. We publish Father de Mazenod's reply, one of the rare letters in which he speaks of nature, and also because we see how he is putting into practice a decision taken during his 1814 retreat: "I must above all be really persuaded that I am doing the will of God when I give myself to service of my neighbour ... and then do my best, without concern if, working in this way, I cannot get other things done for which I would have more of an attraction. ..."

charming; I must be careful not to speak, like other people; and now I regret those three lines which are lacking in common sense. There is nowhere, in fact, more genial than the countryside, richer than nature, especially when the soul, at once religious and sensitive, finds there, beneath each leaf and on every atom's wing the great name of the Eternal One. And the Christian, going deeper, emerges from this kind of rapture to yield himself to transports of love and thanksgiving, at the thought of this All Powerful God who created all these marvels, playfully, *ludens in orbe terrarum*, who draws near to man, man who is confounded and lost at the mere contemplation of the least of his works, to speak with him, instruct, direct him, join himself to him in the intimacy of the most incomprehensible of loves, to dissolve him as it were in his being, and lift him up to share his glory. God, God, and for the most part men live without thinking of this! Adolf, my Adolf, let us bless the Lord for giving us a heart able to understand and especially to perceive him.

Goodbye, dear Adolf, I love you in God with all my soul.

Please convey my respects to your mother and sisters.

## **152. To President de Mazenod, rue des Petites Maries, n. 53, Marseilles.**<sup>33</sup>

*Eugene's love for his sick father. The community of N.D. du Laus is making a novena for him to get well.*

L.J.C.

From Notre Dame du Laus, July 28, [1820]

I am longing, dear good papa, to be able to return to Provence and go and give you a hug as soon as I can in Marseilles. I only heard recently how ill you have been, and when I finally got the news about your condition it was that you were on the mend. ...

This morning I offered the holy sacrifice to ask God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, for your speedy return to health. We will keep up this prayer [p. 2] for this intention over nine days, and on the ninth day I will say Mass for you again. Please join with us and be ready to make

<sup>33</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. FB 1-1. The President and his two brothers returned to France in December 1817. Totally absorbed in his ministry in Aix and the missions, Eugene made few visits to Marseilles where his father and uncle Louis were living; he did however write a few letters, especially when he heard his father was ill.

your devotions the same day I say Mass. If you are still not fit to go out to the church, Mr. Bonnefoy,<sup>34</sup> who understands the value of this prayerful union and knows that it is the mind of the Church that the sick should participate frequently in the divine Eucharist to help them put up with their woes and make them more meritorious, Mr. Bonnefoy will be only too glad to bring you communion at home. The Ritual authorizes this to be done every eight days; so no difficulty on the side of the Church's rules. I am very confident we will obtain in this way what we are all asking for earnestly and fervently. ...

[p. 3] If you are tired, do not go to the trouble of replying. It is enough for me to get news of you, and my Aix sources will be so kind as to see I am not without it. Making up for my uncle, absorbed in his flock, mother has already been in touch, as well as Mrs. de Régusse and our men. ...<sup>35</sup>

### **153. To Count Felix d'Albertas, in Gemenos.<sup>36</sup>**

*He encourages and counsels Felix who feels he is too imperfect. He must count on the grace of Jesus Christ and make use of the necessary means for him to work out his salvation.*

L.J.C.

Aix, September 14, 1820

One sentence of your last-but-one letter, dear Felix, really upset me. I cannot bear to think you are not perfectly happy and I would do anything in the world to dispel all your distresses and perplexities.

If I were there beside you, my friendship, I almost said my tenderness, would lavish such care on you that the anxiety and restlessness you speak of would give way to the most complete tranquillity. There could be no reasonable ground for resistance. You sincerely want to achieve your salvation; you are trying in an upright way to take the means that seem to you proper to achieve it; you are not relying on your own strength but place all your trust in God whom you love as a good father; how can there be any

<sup>34</sup> Father François Bonnefoy, parish priest of St. Theodore's in Marseilles and friend of the President.

<sup>35</sup> Fortuné was living at the house of the Mission in Aix with "our men," i.e., the Missionaries of Provence.

<sup>36</sup> Orig.: Marseilles, arch. d'Albertas. Felix (1789-1872) was a friend of Eugene. President de Mazenod and Felix's father had been presidents together of the Court of Accounts.



anxiety after that? It does injury in a way to the grace of Jesus Christ who has so lovingly gone before you. If I may say so, I have no hesitation in assuring you that, while no doubt you are not yourself aware of it, you have been making very real progress in virtue for some time. I need no further proof of this than those very anxieties I would like to dispel, for they take their origin precisely in the more exact knowledge you have acquired of your duties, and this knowledge that shows you your imperfections in an effect of the supernatural light that the Lord communicates precisely in proportion to the efforts made to draw near to him.

So be of good courage, my dear friend; continue to serve God with love and gratitude; this is the shortest way, it is right on target.

Do not forget to buy Father de Ligny's life of J.C. I am familiar with hardly any of the books on your list. Everything obscene must be burnt, and I usually consign to the same fate all novels likely to awaken the passions. Goodbye, dear, really dear friend. With my warm and affectionate greetings,

Eugene.

#### 154. To Mrs. Roux, nee Bonnacorse, Marseilles.<sup>37</sup>

*Father de Mazenod deplores the existence of a group opposing the establishment of the Missionaries of Provence in Marseilles. He will take no steps to defend himself, he is now used to the "insults and injustice of men."*

L.S.J.C.

Aix, October 23, 1820

I have received, Madam, with very real gratitude the letter you have done me the honour of writing. I truly discerned already in the first few lines the goodness of your heart and the Christian solicitude you show toward our house,<sup>38</sup> I thank you from the bottom of my heart. However while I would be grateful if you would go on keeping me informed about everything touching on the matter in question, I am letting you know in

<sup>37</sup> Orig.: Marseilles, arch. de l'archevêché.

<sup>38</sup> Allusion to the plan for a foundation of the Missionaries of Provence in Marseilles, opposed by friends of the Missionaries of France. Cf. Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod* (Tr. F.D. Flanagan, OMI), Fordham U.P. New York, II, pp. 170-184.

advance that I shall not be making use of what you are so good as to pass on to me. I leave everything to Providence, not only my work which is his, but my own person too. Let them do what they will. I think things are too far advanced to be blocked. It is no doubt more than ridiculous that four women should set themselves up as interpreters for a whole town.<sup>39</sup> But the behaviour of people whose duty it is to judge objectively is even more inconceivable. God in his goodness draws his glory even from men's stupidities. Perhaps he would have inspired those with the right to speak to express their opinion more loudly as with the one from Mr. Nicolas,<sup>40</sup> if our elimination would really be a loss. Whatever about that, I will be silent as I have been up to now unless someone asks me my opinion. Then I will let it be known, as I did in Marseilles to the small number of those who have spoken to me about the affair. But it would always be without taking any action, making the least move in the direction of sending these Gentlemen away and keeping us on. These are not the colours I am being depicted in in Paris, and I do not doubt that there they judge me really harshly, but it does not bother me much. I am getting used to the insults and injustice of men. As long as I am not doing anything displeasing to God, that is my only ambition.

I said holy Mass for you again today, never forget me in your prayers and please accept my respectful good wishes.

Eugene de Mazenod

## 155. Retreat Notes.<sup>41</sup>

*Reflections on the observance of the Rules, fear of death, responsibility for the salvation of souls, spirit of poverty, etc.*

[end of October] 1821<sup>42</sup>

Reflections. Beauty of the office psalmody. Thoughts it gives rise to, sublimity of the end of our institute. At the acts of humility, reflection on

<sup>39</sup> We know a Mrs. Emérigon was one of them: *ibid.* pp. 172, 175.

<sup>40</sup> Father A.B. Nicolas, parish priest of St. Cannat and well-disposed towards the Missionaries of Provence.

<sup>41</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-3. These are simply notes, written in a very fine hand and difficult to read.

<sup>42</sup> The month is not indicated by the Founder, but at that period the annual retreat ended on November 1. In 1821 almost all the Fathers and Brothers took part in the general chapter

the excellence of these acts, the wisdom of the saints who exemplified them, on the fruit one may draw from them. Happiness of living in the society. Explanation of the reserve I showed sometimes as to prescribing or insisting on observance. Apologies to make over the misplaced fear that someone might have said that it is easy for me to insist on something I am exempted from because of my position. Manifestation of my real opinions. At adoration offered the brother who commended himself to my prayers, pray the Lord to give him the strength to overcome the temptations that the demon sifts from his character to deflect him from his duty. At oraison, repugnance for death, brought about by the sight of my infidelities, imbalance in my accounts compared with the talents the Lord confided to me. Frightening responsibility for all the good I have not done or which has not been done on account of me. Everything that is done, however consoling the thought of it may be, will not save me from the reproach of not having done more. I will not miss anything so much as or perhaps nothing at all except my spiritual family. I do not hope ever to reach the point of loving it less, I love it though too much. Think more often about death. It seems really close to me, although I feel young, strong and in good health, but the years go by so swiftly that I think I am bordering on the age of senility, supposing that I do not die still sooner yet. However it seems to me that what most chiefly keeps me going is the Society's good, if, as is said, my existence may contribute to it. At Mass, a thought about St. Peter. I do not know how: he did not have a farthing to give to a poor man. I thank God for giving me this spirit of detachment; I despise money, I make no use of it for myself. But I must foresee the needs that others may have in the future, make provision without attachment. At the sharing, esteem for the Rules, finding them eminently suitable to bring us to our end. I was waiting for the Father to remind me of my obligations, the little outline given gave me much joy; I had given that a lot of serious thought myself. Resolution henceforth to stop at nothing in getting them followed and to take steps to dispense myself as little as possible. My heart's desire to be rid of the slavery of my dealings with the world. Happiness I experience during these days of retreat, living only with my brothers in the practice of obedience. Examen for confession. The idea came to me of formulating the desire like St. Peter on Tabor, that it might last forever, but I repulsed it

held, no doubt, on October 24 (Rey I, 278) and followed by the retreat. It was decided during the chapter to make the vow of poverty obligatory for reception into the Society: cf. Pierlorz, *Les Chapitres généraux au temps du Fondateur*, Ottawa, 1968, I, 22-25.

with the words of St. .... on the occasion of this rash wish of the prince of the apostles: *Descende, labora*, etc.

The beautiful retreat of 1921:<sup>43</sup> Why didn't I write something down? I find only the few lines jotted down above. When I think of all that happened then, how I regret not having kept a record; what a lot of good I would have derived from reading it today when I have so much need of animation.

## 156. Retreat made in May 1824, in our Aix house.<sup>44</sup>

*Joy at finding a time of solitude in the midst of a "whirlwind of business." Prayer to know himself better and to detest his sins. Meditation on the holiness of the priest, the gravity of his sins, etc. Influence of Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice on Father de Mazenod's choice of the missionary life. Opposition to the reform of the diocese of Marseilles. Love of the Congregation. Resolution: follow the Rule, even when not living in a house of the Institute.*

[Beginning of] May 1824<sup>45</sup>

God be praised, blessed, and thanked. I have finally managed to extract myself from the yoke that weighs me down, to sever the chains that oppress me and to which even so I must touch with a kiss; I am allowed to get away for eight days to our dear Aix house<sup>46</sup> and busy myself solely with the matter of my salvation. Please God I may profit from this sweet leisure time that divine Providence affords me to enter into myself, sound the depths of my heart, seek out in my soul and make note of all the damage and ravage the dissipation produced by business matters that multiply and ceaselessly demand attention, has wrought within it. Great God, created only to possess you, having no other real task than to achieve our salvation, why must so many various objects come at every moment and every

<sup>43</sup> These last lines were written later.

<sup>44</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-3.

<sup>45</sup> On May 3 Father Tempier wrote Father Touche: "I am alone here [in Marseilles]. Our superior has gone to make a personal retreat at Aix while Father Enfantin is giving a retreat in our church for the faithful." *Oblate Writings* II, p. 61.

<sup>46</sup> Father de Mazenod was named vicar general of his uncle Fortuné, the Bishop of Marseilles, and had been living at the Bishop's Residence with Father Tempier since the summer of 1823.

day to distract us from the application we should bring to it. How often have I not been tempted to abandon everything and busy myself only with my soul. But no: I am told [p. 2] I must save it by continuing to busy myself with others.

If men but knew how weak I am, how imperfect, the depth of corruption and sin inside me, could they expose me to so much danger, lay on me any other duties than to work at my own sanctification? I need solitude, I need regularity, I need good example. Without these I become lukewarm and my insipid spirit is no longer good for anything unto life eternal. May God grant even so that the state in which I am cast by this whirlwind of business matters which preoccupy, agitate, absorb me, be not that state I have always dreaded and from which in all likelihood I have been unable to preserve myself in these latter times. God grant, God grant that I may not be worse still and that the Lord is not just starting to vomit me from his mouth, but that he may not have implacably banished me from before his face.

Sweet hope, you have ever brought me happiness, and been dear to me for bringing [p. 3] me to see in God a ravishing perfection which made me love him with a delicious abandon, so often have I preached you to my brothers to encourage them to serve God, stiffen them to love, more than fear, him, sweet hope have you abandoned me? What will become of me if you do not sustain my faith, and temper what it teaches me of the rigours of my God's Justice. Come back to me, come back, and be forever my faithful companion in the exacting scrutiny I am going to carry out of my numberless infidelities, in the reflections to which I am going to give myself during this retreat on the sacred duties of my state, the awesome functions entrusted to me, the terrible account the Sovereign Judge will call for of my stewardship. Lord, make to shine on me a ray of your celestial light so that I may know myself as I am in your sight; inspire my soul with the feelings it should be imbued with at the sight of its sins; grant me, I beg you, through the infinite merits of your Passion, through your precious Blood poured out for me, through the intercession of your [p. 4] most holy Mother, grant me the spirit of compunction to convert and change me; may your grace revivify in me the gifts — I do not say virtues — you allotted me and I have not made good use of like a faithful servant, may I leave this retreat filled with a new vigour, firmly resolved not merely to do good, but all the good it is permitted me to do. My God, remember your mercies, for you are my God, *Deus meus es tu* and I am your poor servant *quia ego servus tuus* (Ps. 115:16).

A strange thing! In this retreat I have not given time to a consideration of the eternal verities that constitute the regular, normal fare of the ordinary retreat. God's Spirit focused me on myself. I was never done with the reflections or rather with the feeling this topic gave me, for I produced very few external acts; but I [p. 5] continually experienced the desire to renew myself wholly and I repeated interiorly many times this prayer: *Spiritus rectum innova in visceribus meis* (Ps. 50:12).

I have an explanation why I did not feel drawn to meditate on the great Truths. I came on this retreat already decided on the reform that was necessary in my inner self. This thought was uppermost in my mind, my heart embraced it and went with it with all the strength of its affection and desire, there was no need for me to convince myself, whether by seeking to consider my last end or seeking to focus my attention, move me to make resolutions by the sight of death, the fear of judgment, etc. My God's grace had prepared my soul, I was so to speak already at the point of "the conclusion" when I entered into solitude. Whatever about that, this is what happened. In all truth, those great topics towards which God's Spirit did not draw me in the present instance were not total strangers during my retreat; as my retreat coincided with that which [p. 6] good Father Enfantin was giving in our church, I assisted at his instructions, but that is as far as it went. My readings centered 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 confided to his direction, a priest whom God has awakened 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.

Blessed Liguori and Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice contributed most to these precious readings. I was consoled to go over again the principal traits of the latter's life, remembering that about eight or nine years ago the same reading made my tears flow in torrents, and perhaps passed on to me without my perceiving it, the spirit that drew me on shortly afterwards, i.e., about three years, to follow the same career, at least to carry out the same ministry as him; would to God that I had not been deflected from it by duties of a new kind that have just been laid upon me! I can see only one advantage in it, that by applying myself to carrying them out as best I can, I have learnt, or rather, I have had the occasion to conceive a greater

horror for the world, which indeed I already thoroughly detested; it has been so unjust, acted so atrociously towards me, and when I say “the world,” I include people of every kind, that I would have to be insane to attach any value to its good opinion or favours.

Even so in two days’ time I will find myself once more in contact with it. I must resume my post. This will be, I hope, again to do my duty there, to try by my every zealous effort to bring a little bit of life back into a dead diocese whatever appearance of health it may have; there will no doubt be new crises, there was never a reform without hurting, wounding plenty of people! No matter; have God alone before us, the honour of his Church, the salvation of the souls entrusted to us; consult only the divine Wisdom, trample on human wisdom [p. 8], and God will be our help. But one must have much virtue to sacrifice one’s peace for one’s duty, to face the hatred and persecution of men precisely so as to do good for men. This virtue is acquired and conserved only by union with God, prayer and meditation, etc., walking always before God and keeping one’s eyes on heaven alone and its rewards which are none other than God himself. Lord! Grant me the grace of being ever more deeply imbued with these thoughts!

Before coming out from retreat I must focus my ideas on the personal *rule I must follow during the time, for my sins, I am kept in Marseilles*. The thought that in two days’ time I must return to my exile fills me with dismay and I resign myself to it only with much distress, but since it has to be I will try to arrange things so that the fulfilling of one duty does no harm to the fulfilling of another. Vicar General of Marseilles by necessity and under compulsion, I do not cease for that reason to be the head or rather [p. 9] the father of this Society all of whose members are models of every virtue; I belong above all and principally to this family for which the Lord has given me so much love and which is for me constantly and so justly an object of admiration. I may well say of these dear children like the mother of Maccabees that I do not know how they came to be formed in my bosom. Alas! They all have incomparably more virtue than I and I could well say I am not worthy to untie the straps of their sandals. How happy I count myself to be one of them! What thanks do I not owe to God for having given them to me. I will therefore always live in spirit in the most intimate union with them, and while waiting for the possibility of setting up in Marseilles a regular house which may procure us some part of the advantages that are found in abundance in our dear house in Aix, so far as I can I will observe the Rule on my own, conforming so far as possible to the

very times of the exercises. So [p. 10] I will rise at 5 o'clock in the morning or 5:30 at the latest when I go to bed too late, which I will try to avoid.

According as I rise at 5 or 5:30, I will meditate for three quarters or half an hour. Holy Mass will follow immediately on oraison. After thanksgiving of the Mass, I will read Scripture for half an hour. To be united with my brothers' time for saying the Office according to what time it is when the half-hour Scripture reading finishes, I will say my small Hours before or after my breakfast. I will not wait until eleven thirty to say Sext and None as I would all too often be exposed to the risk of postponing them, since it is the time for business in the secretariat, that is why I will not separate them from Prime and Tierce which I will be saying at eight o'clock.

After breakfast, I will get down to work which will always begin with an hour's theology study. [p. 11]

When there is not any very urgent business in the bishopric, I will extend this one hour's study, otherwise I will get down to the matters pertaining to my office.

During the hours dedicated to office business, I will try to dispatch the letters and move the correspondence forward so far at least as is consistent with the affluence of people who have business with us in those moments.

Immediately before dinner, I will do the exercise of particular examen as it is done in our houses, except that I will not start with reading the New Testament, as this reading is done at the Bishop's table during dinner.

I will conclude the examen with our customary litanies. If one of our members happens to be in the bishopric at that time it will be in order for him to make the examen at the same time as, and with, me.

After dinner when my uncle does not need me, I will make my escape as soon as possible unless the duties of propriety detain me in the drawing-room. [p. 12]

If I have some business outside, I will go out for that purpose. In this case I will bring along my breviary to say Vespers and Compline in the church I go into to make my adoration.



## 157. [Examination of conscience].<sup>47</sup>

*He examines his duties as a Christian, a religious and Oblate of Mary Immaculate and as such obliged to seek a lofty perfection by the "apostolic" vocation and the obligation to supply for the religious Orders destroyed by the Revolution.*

[October] 1826<sup>48</sup>

My examination has to cover 1. My general duties as a Christian; 2. My duties as a simple religious; 3. My duties as superior, both in my own regard and towards the subjects who are under my obedience; 4. My duties as priest; 5. My duties as vicar general of the diocese.

The examination of my general duties as a Christian must extend to all the commandments of God and the Church, the capital sins, natural evil tendencies, dominant faults, the heart's affections. In all these areas I must go a little beyond simply the present moment to lay bare the root of the vices and the source of all the spirit's disorders.

The examination of my duties as a simple religious must cover my cooperation with the exceptional grace of vocation and make note of the endless sequence of infidelities, resistance, ingratitude. Although for three years I have been barred by force of circumstances from mission work, I will glance over the preceding years and discern the faults I committed in the exercise of this ministry that is proper to my vocation. I will next examine how I have lived my vows, stressing the obedience I owe to the Rules to which I must submit in everything compatible with my other duties which must never serve as a pretext for exempting myself from them.

[p. 2] 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. We have been specially founded for the conversion of souls and

<sup>47</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-3. A single page only, begun no doubt during the annual retreat and left unfinished.

<sup>48</sup> In 1826 it is in Marseilles that the Fathers assembled for the annual retreat that took place, in accordance with the Oblate custom, from October 24 to the first of November: cf. Mazenod to Mie, October 11, 1826, in *Oblate Writings* 7, p. 121.

God has shown us over the period of years we have been proclaiming his mercies to sinners that he is ready to work miracles through our ministry. It is the seal of his approval.

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 embraced in a more extended sense. And that is the end of our Institute. It fills me with confusion to have understood it so badly! What a subject for my examination!

### 158. [Note on Father Suzanne's illness].<sup>49</sup>

*Father de Mazenod's grief; the friendship uniting him with the sick man.*

[End of January 1829]<sup>50</sup>

These were so many words which were thrusts of the sword that I am amazed they did not cause my death. I have never understood the Blessed Virgin's anguish beside the cross as now. I die a hundred times each day; my grief is excessive, it is beyond words. When I am beside him my heart is riven; but I pull myself together and speak to him of God. He follows affectionately all I say, but when I am not with him, I feel desolate. I carry a mental picture of him always present to me: what he means and has meant to me, and I to him. I carry in my mind memories going back over thirteen years. I am in continual agony; I would die if I did not find relief from time to time in an outburst of sobbing and copious tears. I do not think any of my children<sup>51</sup> love me like he does. It could be said he

<sup>49</sup> Copy in Jeancard, *Mélanges Historiques* ... , 332 and Rey I, 461-462. According to Father Rey, a written note was taken, on the Founder's orders, of all that happened during the three months of Father Suzanne's illness. The original of this text has vanished. After reciting some words of the sick man, reproduced in the *Journal*, the Founder added the note that follows.

<sup>50</sup> This text seems to have been written a few days before Father Suzanne's death on January 31, 1829.

<sup>51</sup> Marius Suzanne (1799 - 1829) was Father de Mazenod's son twice over, i.e., as a member of the Youth Congregation and as an oblate from the time of his entry at the house of the Mission on October 14, 1816.

modeled his heart and mind on mine, or, to phrase it better, this happened wholly naturally. Never was there such a broad likeness of thoughts, feelings, opinions, tastes, outlook. Did he not say to me a score of times that his trust in me knew no bounds, that he wished his every thought, feeling or desire to be an open-book to me? Is not the memory of such a union enough to bring tears to my eyes and plunge me into the bitterest of sorrows? God! you are sundering two hearts made to be ever united. However, this will not be for long.

## **159. [Reflections on the occasion of the death of Father Suzanne].<sup>52</sup>**

*Father de Mazenod's attachment to Father Marius Suzanne; his grief at his death.*

March 9, 1829

A precious picture for a desolate and inconsolable father. It was twice kissed with a sweet rapture by our beloved Father Suzanne, a few moments before his holy death (January 31, 1829).

The heavenly smile depicted on his face, when immediately afterwards he looked up at me as if in thanks, vividly expressed everything this blessed man wanted to express of love and trust in his darling Mother, our great patron, Mary.

My son, your traits like your virtues are graven on my soul in indelible characters! I will love you in your absence as I loved you when you were the apple of my eye. What am I saying, absent! Are you not ever alive in my heart, present in my thoughts?

My beloved son, who will console me over your loss? The memory of what you meant to me? Alas! I have you no longer! The thought of the eternal happiness you are enjoying? Summon me then to your side, for me to share it.

He whom you dubbed "your all" after God.

Charles Joseph Eugene de Mazenod. O.M.I.

<sup>52</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post.: display of souvenirs and relics. This text was written on the back of a picture of Mary Immaculate.

**160. [To Mr. Antoine Garnier, superior general of St. Sulpice, in Paris].<sup>53</sup>**

*He writes a letter of recommendation for Father Riccardi. Grave illness of Father de Mazenod who has not celebrated mass for several months.*

Grans, near Salon, July 26, 1829

Most dear and respected friend;

Although the newspapers have me dead, I still have enough life left in me to commend to you Father Riccardi<sup>54</sup> who was to have written to ask your permission to enter with St. Sulpice. He is a priest in good standing who professed theology for two years in our Marseilles seminary; he is studious and a lover of community life. In short I believe you would make something out of him by forming him in the Sulpician way, in Issy's holy solitude. If you see fit to reply to his letter and yield to my commendation, you should send it to the Marseilles Major Seminary.

Shall I mention my health? it has suffered a rude shock from two consecutive and very severe illnesses<sup>55</sup> that brought me to death's door. God in his goodness yielded to the innumerable prayers both private and public that were said for me and left me on earth. Pray, my respected and very dear friend, that it may redound to my sanctification.

It is hard work getting back to normal, the attack was so severe. You find me now in my fifth week as a convalescent and today I scarcely dared to offer the holy Sacrifice, however much I may have desired this happiness, and to leave off receiving communion like a layman, which is what I have been reduced to. That is much too much certainly; but our Sovereign Priest who deigned, wholly unworthy though I was, to associate me with his priesthood, will not find it bad that it seems to me insufficient. May his

<sup>53</sup> Orig.: Paris, arch. du séminaire St. Sulpice.

<sup>54</sup> N.L. Riccardi who had left the Oblate Congregation some months previously.

<sup>55</sup> Two illnesses: This refers to an illness that left Father de Mazenod weak and for a long time enervated, following the death of Father Suzanne (January 31, 1829) and the illness of Father Courtès in April-May of the same year. The Founder was so affected by the death and sickness respectively of these two priests, who he called "the apples of his eye" (letter to Father Tempier, May 10, 1829) that he was himself taken seriously ill from May 15 to the end of June.

holy will be done; I would put aside even this desire were I to believe it did not conform with it.

Goodbye, my dear and respected friend, it has cost me a great effort to write to you, so weak am I still; but I was kept going by the pleasure of chatting for a moment with a friend such as yourself, someone I will count on all my life, as you can on me.

Your very humble servant,

Mazenod, vicar general

P.S. Please convey my compliments to those of your men who still remember me.

## 161. Areas of renewal.<sup>56</sup>

*Areas of renewal: prayer, divine office, mass, zeal, the thought of death that blocks activity.*

1830-1835.<sup>57</sup>

Prayer made without recollection, respect, piety, confidence of being heard, with no feeling for one's needs, no relish; and made rarely, briefly, intermittently.

Pious practices reduced to a minimum, the effect of work piling up. Restore the practice in an efficacious way, with sobriety as to number, but fidelity in carrying them out.

Divine office *perfunctorie*.<sup>58</sup> Never say it as a stop gap. Arrange so far as possible for fixed times. Avoid it being mere lip service. Let it be above all a prayer. Divide it up both so as to enter better into the mind of the Church and so as not to be open to fatigue from over-long mental concentration.

<sup>56</sup> Orig: arch. de la Post. DM IV-3.

<sup>57</sup> Undated page. It is difficult to fix on one. The context ("the tedium of a wearying struggle," "a certain contempt for men") would seem to indicate these notes may have been written between 1830 and 1835, after the death of Father Suzanne, while he was ill (1829-1830), during his struggle against the civil authorities after the July Revolution (1830-1832) and during the Icosia affair.

<sup>58</sup> Latin adverb: perfunctorily.

Holy Mass. Make a better preparation by means of reflections related to the sacrifice and special acts. Focus the intention and specify the application of indulgences.

Zeal that is deadened: 1. through want of piety and the spirit of faith, 2. through the tedium of a wearying struggle, 3. by a certain contempt of men.

A vague idea of death persists when some action comes up and puts me off it. This thought has to be harnessed for a useful purpose by meditating on this topic once a month.

## **162. Resolutions for the time of the annual retreat.<sup>59</sup>**

*To isolate himself totally to make a good “conversion” retreat. He will use the Pontifical and the Rules to examine his duties as a priest and religious, but he will meditate too on death and hell as privation of God.*

Laudetur Jesus Christus et  
Maria Virgo sine labe concepta.

M[arsei]lles, [end of] October 1831.<sup>60</sup>

This is what I have to do in this retreat:

1. Isolate myself totally from my ordinary tasks, not want to hear a word about them whatever may happen.

2. See no one from outside who may even simply remind me of them.

3. Then enter a state of absolute mental and physical relaxation without striving to produce anything. It would be tantamount to swimming against the stream with a lot of stress and little success to act in any other way on leaving behind this brouhaha, this pile-up of business of every kind in which I am habitually mired.

4. Once the torrent has subsided and I begin to be alone with myself, I will ask God for his grace to make a fruitful retreat. I will pray with all the fervour I am capable of to the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, my guardian Angel and other saints.

<sup>59</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-3.

<sup>60</sup> In his letter dated October 25, 1831, to the Oblates of Billens, Father de Mazenod writes that he will be on retreat until the first of November.

5. My starting point will be that it is a question this time of a retreat of conversion and not of perfection, i.e., my business is not to become better but to become good.

6. I am feeling somewhat vague about it, but I will achieve conviction by challenging my way of carrying out my duties.

7. I will subject them all to a close scrutiny, first those of a priest, then those of a religious. In examining the former I will look at myself in my role as vicar general, and while delving deeper into the latter I will dwell especially on myself in that of superior.

8. [p. 2] The Pontifical on the one hand and the Rule Book on the other will provide me with material.

9. Among other motivations for going to the heart of the matter, I will consider my age (I have entered my fiftieth year) and the scourge of God that is threatening us.<sup>61</sup> It is good to think about my half-century, for it is forgotten when one's health is good, and about the *cholera morbus* for it seems too far away when talking about it. However, one does not cease to grow old because one feels like a thirty-year-old, and if cholera comes all of a sudden one has to become dedicated without delay and confront all its dangers. And to do that one must be ready to appear before God.

10. So in this retreat one must envisage death a little more close-up than usually. When one feels young and in good health, one sees before one a long series of years, and no sign of bodily dissolution. One has to call in aid the imagination to dream up an illness without having any of the symptoms, and which since it has nothing of the real world about it arouses none of the conviction for fearing death it is supposed ought to follow on it. But when one is persuaded that one is getting old, that one might have died on two occasions in a month, then when one tells oneself that cholera could arrive any day by land or sea, and once it has come, it could dispatch you in a few hours, the argument [p. 3] is more cogent, and the conclusion easier.

11. So the thought of death can therefore be employed this time more successfully than usual.

<sup>61</sup> The Founder does not mention cholera in his letters of 1831, but an epidemic was underway in the Mediterranean ports; it began to threaten France and even Switzerland in April 1832: cf. letter to Father Mille, April 21, 1832.

12. I will gladly include too that of hell which figured little in my other retreats, but if I want to make effective use of it where I am concerned, my approach must be quite the opposite of that indicated in some books. No “representation of place,” no pictures of demons or of the damned, no going into the details of torments, for it is my experience that all that fantasy-world usually conjured up, far from frightening my mind, revolts me and damages my conviction which cannot be based on things it can refuse to believe, or at least that it can look on as exaggerations, or as the product of someone’s imagination. So I will stay with what is of faith, and above all with the consideration of being deprived of God, as opposed to the beatitude of the elect in heaven.

In this way I will reach a conviction of the futility of things the search for which can cause one to lose the unique good that is God.

13. Once I have identified something as an obstacle to my end, I will make the sacrifice of it to God, cost what it may, and taking the resolutions necessary to walk in the spirit of my vocation, I will be faithful thereto with the help of grace.

### 163. [Notes of annual retreat]<sup>62</sup>

*Meditation on the Rules; commentary. Excellence of the Rules approved by the Pope and which should be observed. Ends and means. Parish missions. The vows, silence, community exercises. Imitation of Jesus Christ. Charity and humility.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

[end of] October, 1831.

The reflective reading of our Rules I have just made during this retreat has filled my soul with wonder, and has raised in my mind a number of disquieting thoughts that I have to put down on paper.

The shame of having in one’s hands so perfect a code, and of not having grasped its meaning! Are there not indeed some among us for whom this code is a sealed book? I want to believe that there are none any longer, but it is enough that there were for my reflection to stand and make it food for thought. If everyone had been able to read what is in this book we would not have had to deplore the loss of many whom God will judge.

<sup>62</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-3.



[Rules given by the Church; God is their author.]

I said to myself while meditating on our Rules that we will never be able sufficiently to thank the divine bounty for having given them to us, for God alone indisputably is their author. The person who consigned them to writing does not recognize anything in them as coming from himself; so it is in full liberty that he passes judgment on them, as of a work which is extraneous to himself. But how can I even speak of judgment where the Church has spoken in the person of its head! *Alacri libentique animo eamdem Ipsam (Congregationem) constituimus, eamque nomine Congregationis Oblatorum Sanctissimae Virginis Mariae sine labe conceptae volumus insignitam. Adhibita praeterea in consilium congregatione Venerabilium fratrum nostrorum S.C.R. Cardinalium, negotiis et consultationibus Episcoporum et Regularium praeposita, illius Constitutiones, quas nonnulli Galliae Episcopi luculentissimis testimoniis accommodas putarunt, et plerique etiam, quo major auctoritas illis accederet, grati animi ergo propria manu consignavere, plena auctoritate nostra apostolica approbamus et confirmamus, easque a cooptatis in eamdem Congregationem viris, quascunque in illa partes gerentibus, sedulo servari praecipimus. Ad quam saluberrimi operis approbationem et commendationem, etc.*<sup>63</sup>

That is how Pope Leo XII put it, in the Apostolic Letters of institution. Judgment is thus rendered by infallible authority!

[They have to be observed].

It is then only a question of deepening the sense of these words *Saluberrimi operis* to which one might add those with which the Head of the Church concludes his apostolic letters: *In spem demum erigimus fore ut istius sacrae familiae alumni, qui sub quibusdam legibus efformandis ad pietatem animis adeo opportunis, etc.*, for one to be convinced of the excellence of these laws and of the obligation we all are under to observe them with exactness *sedulo servari praecipimus*, these are the very words of the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

[p. 2] And so in observing our Rules we are obeying the Church, *sedulo servari praecipimus*; consequently anyone who does not observe them would be disobeying the Church and its Head. Such a one is his own judge.

<sup>63</sup> Extracts from the Brief of Leo XII, March 21, 1826, published in *Missions OMI* 1952, pp. 565-575 (pp. 165-174 of the fascicule).

It is not I who will have to answer for his salvation. All the worse for him! I feel sorry for him. What a consoling thought, by observing our Rule we are obeying the Church. And as our Rule embraces every action of our lives, and the spirit which must animate them, all that we do shares in the great merit of obedience to the Church. And as the Church commands nothing but good, what is conducive to salvation, by observing our Rule we are walking in the way of heaven. There is no room for argument.

So let us hold this precious Rule in high esteem, have it always before our eyes, and even more in the heart, let us continually nourish our souls with the principles it contains, let us do nothing, say nothing, think nothing that is not in conformity with its spirit. It is only in this way that we shall be what God wants us to be and make ourselves worthy of our sublime vocation.

[Excellence of the end and means of the Institute.]

Will we ever have an adequate understanding of this sublime vocation! For that one would have to understand the excellence of our Institute's end, beyond argument the most perfect one could propose to oneself in this world, since the end of our Institute is the self-same end that the Son of God had in mind when he came down on earth. The glory of his heavenly Father and the salvation of souls. *Venit enim filius hominis quaerere et saluum facere quod perierat* [Luke 19:10], he was sent especially to evangelize the poor *evangelizare pauperibus misit me* [Luke 4:18]. And we have been founded precisely to work for the conversion of souls, and especially to evangelize the poor, *finis hujus parvae Societatis ... est ... ut fratres habitantes in unum praecipuam dent operam pauperibus evangelizandis, virtutes et exempla Salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi assidua imitatione prossequendo* (Art. 1, c. 1, p. 1 de fine).<sup>64</sup>

The means that we employ to attain this end share in the excellence of this end, again they are unquestionably the most perfect since they are precisely those same means used by our divine Saviour, his Apostles and his first disciples, that is to say the exact practice of the evangelical counsels, preaching and prayer, [p. 3] a happy blend of the active and contemplative

<sup>64</sup> The Rules of 1825-1826, edited in 1827, are published in *Missions OMI* 1951, pp. 340-479. The texts that follow are those of the Preface, pp. 341ff. (pp. 121-25 of the fascicule).

Father de Mazenod himself indicates between parentheses the chapters and paragraphs from which he is taking the texts he is copying, or sometimes the pages of the edition of 1827.

life of which Jesus Christ and the Apostles have set us an example, which is without doubt by that fact alone the pinnacle of the perfection that God has given us the grace of possessing, and of which our Rules are but the development.

[We must steep ourselves in the spirit of the Rules].

It means thus steeping ourselves in the spirit of these Rules and to arrive at that one must make it the subject of our habitual meditations. I have become more and more convinced myself of this during this retreat, and to help me put this into practice I thought it would be useful to extract from the book of our Constitutions the articles that express most explicitly why we were founded and what we ought to be. This will be my *vade mecum*, my treasure, from which I promise myself to derive great profit for my spiritual progress; others may also try this if this little collection appeals to them. As for myself, when I see brought together in a few pages everything that can constitute perfection on earth and consider that our Constitutions present us with “this everything” as the prototype of the true Oblate of Mary, I rejoice to be called to so high a perfection, without being intimidated by the thought of my extreme weakness, as I am full of confidence in the power of Him who always grants the grace to carry out the precepts he imposes.

[The end of the Congregation].

Who is it decreed the foundation of our Congregation? This is what our Constitutions teach me:

... *Ecclesia, praeclara Christi Salvatoris haereditas ... in diebus nostris saevae depraedationi patuit. Haec dilecta unigeniti Filii Dei sponsa, filiorum quos peperit turpi defectione lugens, terretur ... etc. (vid. p. 1). In hoc miserrimo rerum statu, Ecclesia conclamat sibi ministros, etc. Sed heu! Pauci sunt qui maternam hanc instantiam non abnuant; multi etiam Ecclesiae mala vituperabili sua agendi ratione aggravant, etc.*

[p. 4] Is it surprising that the sight of these disorders inspired a certain generous thought? There appeared some priests who were touched by it.

*Malorum istorum consideratione commota sunt corda quorundam Sacerdotum quibus gloria Dei cura est, qui Ecclesiam Charitatis affectu prosequantur (p. 2).*

May they remember what grace inspired them with. It meant nothing less than making an offering of themselves: *et vellent victimas sese, si expediret, animarum saluti devovere (ibid).*

Nothing being loftier than this offering, what do I conclude? It is that nothing should seem difficult, or too painful, when one has offered oneself as victim.

But how is one to go about bringing some remedy for such great ills, for it is not enough just to desire it.

[How attain the end?].

*Illis exploratum est quod si possent informari sacerdotes animarum salutis studio incensi, non turpis lucri cupidi, firma pietate praediti, apostolici uno verbo viri, qui callentes necessitatem emendationis propriae, laborarent pro parte sua ad conversionem aliorum, posset agitari spes brevi revocandi populos errantes ad religionis officia diutius oblivioni data (p. 2 et 3).*

There then we have what one has to be if one is to hope to succeed. Indeed, what did Our Lord do when he wanted to convert the universe?

*Quosdam Apostolos et discipulos elegit, pietate a seipso informatos, Spiritu suo plenos, et ipsos doctrina sua institutos misit in orbem terrarum, sancto imperio suo mox subjiciendum (p. 3).*

Thus models are to hand, it remains only to imitate them, but for following in the footsteps of such models, a common virtue will not suffice. The Constitutions will make it plain. *Quid vice sua sit ab hominibus agendum cupidis implendi vestigia Jesu Christi divini sui Magistri, ut illi revindicerent tot animas quae jugum ejus confregere?*

Read attentively and hold fast to what comes next, for it is what your Constitutions require you to be, so weigh each word, engrave the meaning on your heart: *Serio sanctitati suae incumbere habent, instare etiam viriliter [p. 5] easdem vias quas tot apostoli, quas tot operarii evangelici, qui, in eodem agone certantes in quo semetipsos rapi sentiunt, tot mira nobis tantarumque virtutum exempla suppeditarunt; debent penitus abnegare semetipsos, debent soli gloriae divinae, Ecclesiae utilitati, animarum saluti unice studere, debent sese renovare jugiter in spiritu mentis suae, debent vivere in statu habituali propriae abjectionis et in voluntate perpetua perfectionis apicem obtinendi, assiduam dantes operam ut fiant humiles, mansueti, obediens, paupertatis amatores, poenitentiae et mortificationis dediti, ab inordinata mundi vel parentum affectione alieni, zelo zelati ut parati sint impendere opes, dotes, vitae otia, vitam ipsam amoris Domini nostri Jesu Christi, utilitati Ecclesiae et sanctificationi fratrum suorum; deinde divina superabundantes fiducia, possunt in agonem*

*procedere decertaturi usque ad interneccionem, pro majore sanctissimi et tremendissimi Nominis ejus gloria (p. 3 et 4).*

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 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!

*Quamobrem isti sacerdotes, sese devovendo omnibus operibus bonis ad quae charitas sacerdotalis inducere potest, et maxime sanctis missionibus quas ipsorum Societas tanquam finem ultimum habet, obtemperare intendunt institutis et constitutionibus, ex quibus, quoad sanctificationem propriam et animarum salutem, non minima habeant emolumenta Societatis suae (p. 5 et 6).*

For the rest this wonderful paragraph that we cited above and which cannot be meditated on too much, is simply the development of what is expressed in a single line in article 1 *de fine Societatis*. There it is said: *Finis hujus parvae Societatis Missionariorum Oblatorum Ssae et Itae Virg. Mariae, ... est ... ut coadunati Sacerdotes ... et ut fratres habitantes in unum, praecipuam dent operam pauperibus evangelizandis, VIRTUTES ET EXAMPLA SALVATORIS NOSTRI JESU CHRISTI ASSIDUA IMITATIONE PROSEQUENDO.*

It is all there: *virtutes et exempla Salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi assidua imitatione prosequendo*. If only one could engrave these words on one's heart, have them written everywhere to have them always before one's eyes.

[p. 6] The more I go on, the more I am confounded, astonished, ravished by our lofty destiny. My God, give us the grace to understand the meaning of this third article *de fine Societatis*, that one has all too often read without thinking: *Finem habet etiam ista Societas officia et partes, si fieri possit, suscipiendi pro tot tantisque religionis institutionibus, a Gallicana perturbatione sublatis (art. 3).*

*Officia et partes.* Run through all the religious Orders that the Revolution destroyed in France. Remember the various ministries they exercised, virtues they practised, some in the secrecy of God's House, in contemplation and prayer, others in service of neighbour through every

work of the most sustained zeal, and draw your own conclusions from this article 3 and its unfolding of such an important second end of our institute.

The following article as well carries an insistence that brings home its importance and reminds us succinctly of the chief duties: "*Toti erunt etiam Missionarii, qui pristinum harumce religiosarum institutionum pietatis ardorem in pectore suo resuscitent et foveant, nec non istarum et pia ministeria et virtutes, et observantissimae vitae exercitationes, puta consiliorum evangelicorum studium, amorem solitudinis et silentii, contemptum omnium vanitatum mundi, subtractionem a nugis mente religiosa indignis, divitiarum horrorem, carnis et animae mortificationem, divinum officium palam et communiter recitatum, intermorientium et incarceratorum subventionem, et praesertim missionum munus amplectantur* (art. 4).

[Parish missions and other works of ministry].

*Praesertim missionum munus.* The Constitutions come back to it again and again and rightly so as missions are the first and principal end of the Institute. So I do not think that it is necessary to insist on this point: *Quum missiones sint praecipuus Instituti scopus, omnes potissimum studeant ut munus istud accurate persolvant* (Art. 1, parag. 1, De missionibus).

The whole should be read, but note the passage: *Caveant summopere missionarii ne, specie quidem, malo sint aliis exemplo; eaque sit illorum vivendi ratio, quae venerationem sibi populorum concilient. Numquam, sub charitatis pretextu, sese matrimoniorum contractibus, pactionibus vel testamentis immisceant; ... uno verbo, omnibus abhorreant negotiis, quibus plerumque ministerium evangelicum vilesceat, et contrahentium animi conturbantur* (Art. 25, parag. 1, De missionibus).

[p. 7] That is not all: *Cum non sit tantum finis Instituti missionibus operari, verum etiam, quantum in nobis, exiguo sane grege, inerit, Ordines religiosos supplere malaque resarcire quae in clero irrepserunt, persuasum habebitur facilius eo diveniendum exemplis quam verbis. Ideo in omni genere virtutum exerceri nullique earum alienos fieri quantum necesse sit omnes apprime retinebunt* (Art. 1, De praedic. verb. div.).

*Fundamento virtutum posito, singuli societatis subditi omni bono accingentur obedientia praescribendo* (art. 9, *ibid.*).

... *eo vero non diveniatur (the conversion of souls by preaching), nisi propriae gloriae abrenuntiando, miseros hominum plausus in corde conspescendo, uno verbo, nisi praedicando, Apostoli more, Christum Jesum et hunc Crucifixum ... non in sublimitate sermonis, sed in ostensione Spiritus, ostendentes scilicet nos verba quae annuntiamus in corde nostro con-*

tulisse, et coepisse facere antequam docere attentaverimus (Art. 5, *ibid.*).

Yet again: *Prae oculis semper erit, praecipuum esse Instituti scopum animabus magis derelictis scilicet opitulari. Unde miseri in carceribus detenti ad charitatem nostram jus habent legitimum.* (Art. 1, *De Min. in carc. det. praestando*).

Zeal and charity. We have seen what he must be for himself; now the Rule explains what he must be for the others. It lays down what he must do to preach fruitfully in the paragraph *de praedicando verbo div.*, in that *de Sacramen. poenitentiae administratione*. After bringing home to him the importance of this ministry it adds: *Numquam ergo missionarius sui officii opem, sive per missionis exercitia, sive extra exercitiorum tempus, deneget expostulantibus* (Art. 2).

*Nulla qua suum illud munus declinet, tergiversatione utatur; se contra ultro offerat, et quos viderit in obsequendo gratiae fluctuantes, eos ad tribunal, quoquemodo poterit, nitatur adducere, imo etiam acriter repugnant, hujus memor evangelici verbi: compelle intrare, vi attrahere, si possit, experiatur misericors. Non pauci hac via ad Deum conversi memorantur;* and lower down: *Caeterum, missionarius peccatores inexhausta charitate excipiat, vultu facili et misericordii fessos erigat; quot tandem sibi, si miserorum par, fieri vellet, et miseris faciat* (Art. 3 et 12 *ibid.*). XII *ibid.*

Re-read the whole of chap. III to fill oneself with the spirit of charity that the Rule inculcates and the [p. 8] very efficacious means it suggests to render our ministry useful to our neighbour and meritorious for ourselves.

[The vows, silence, exercises].

The whole first chapter of the second part treats of the vows. All its articles are definitive and regulatory. They must be known by heart so as to conform not only to the spirit but to the letter from which it is never permissible to stray.

The second chapter and the third chapter contain principles that must be meditated. It is only by this means that we will arrive at understanding what an Oblate of Mary must be; let us add them to what we extracted from the first part and the preface of the Rule. *Tota vita sodalium Societatis nostrae perpetua debet esse animi recollectio* (Art. 1, *De silentio*, etc.).

*Quod ut attingant, imprimis summo opere curant jugiter coram Deo ambulare; ejusque memoriam brevis set ignitae orationis jaculis in mentem suam revocare.* (Art. 2, *ibid.*) ...

*Silentio ... perfectioni paratissimo, quovis tempore studebimus; strictius tamen servabitur ab oratione serotina, etc.*

Take good note of the *N.B.* of paragraph 1 from ch. 2. It certainly does not say: if anyone finds these Rules too hard, they will be dispensed, they will be tempered to their weakness. Not at all! The Rule insists, explains its apparent rigour, gives peremptory reasons as motivations, urges the law, for in reality there can be no accomodation on a point of duty: *Si quis*, says the Rule, *si quis istas et sequentes regulas tanquam humanae infirmitati asperiores habere vellet, hunc obsecramus in Domino ut perpendat: 1. Omni fructu vacuum in aeternum fore ministerium nostrum, nisi spirituali profectui nostro ferventer incumberemus. 2. Vocationi qua vocati sumus, nos semper impares futuros esse sine auxilio illius observantiae, quam absolute necessariam habuere omnes spiritualis vitae Patres sanctique praesertim Ordinum fundatores. 3. Perpendat nos per maiorem anni partem, tempus nempe missionum exercitiorumque subsequentium, inter mundum invite projectos, ibique praecipue et quasi unice peccatoribus a vitiorum coeno revocandis consulentes, salutis propriae periculum haud dubie adituros, nisi saltem per breves hujus periculosi ministerii inducias [p. 9] sub providentissimam Regulam tuti et cauti confugiamus. Si ergo nobis summa felicitas cordi est, si in illo discrimine adduci nolumus ut, postquam aliis praedicavissimus, ipsi reprobi efficiamur, non modo ab hujus optimae observantiae, virtutum sospitae, jugo non abhorreamus, verum etiam vehementer doleamus quod, debitis charitatis officiis a convictu fratrum, in quo viget illa virtus, saepius diutiusque remoti, per longam vitae nostrae partem, ejus influxus beneficio privemur inviti* (*N.B. in parag. 1., c. 2, de silentio et interna animi recollectione*).

[The imitation of Jesus Christ, devotion to Mary.]

Always the obligation to retrace Jesus Christ in our persons: *Speciali meditatione contemplabuntur ... virtutes Domini Nostri Jesu Christi, quas membra Societatis nostrae debent in semetipsis ad vivum exprimere; et quolibet mense peculiarum hujus divini Exemplaris virtutem sibi eligent, ut modo perfectiore ad hujus virtutis praxim sese exerceant. Easdem etiam virtutes acquirendas sibi proponent in examine particulari et spiritualibus collationibus* (*De Oratione aliisque exercitiis, ibid.*)

Devotion to Mary must also characterize us: *Semel saltem in die, Christum Dominum invisent adoraturi. Visitationis causa ad imaginem quoque vel aras beatae Virginis sese conferent, dulcemque Mariam peculiaris prosequenter devotionis affectu ac in Matrem semper habebunt.*



*Ideo quotidie coronam Virginis recitabunt, et omnem navabunt operam quo populi Immaculatam sanctissimamque Deiparam ferventius fiducialiusque colant (ibid.).*

Everything has not been said on the virtues that must adorn the Oblate of Mary, the spirit that must animate him; listen again: *Quoniam uberes e ministerio suo fructus nunquam reportabunt evangelici operarii, nisi Christi mortificationem summo pretio habeant illamque quasi jugiter in suo corpore circumferant, cupiditatibus coercendis propriaeque voluntati in omnibus abnegandae sedulo incumbunt Societatis [p. 10] alumni; atque, apostolicis inhaerentes vestigiis, gloriabuntur in infirmitatibus, in contumeliis, in persecutionibus, in angustiis pro Christo, etc. (De Martificatione, Art. 1).*

Would one believe the Rule thinks there has been sufficient insistence on the indispensable necessity of imitating Jesus Christ? No. Here now it presents us with the Saviour as the true founder of the Congregation, and the Apostles who were the first to follow in the footsteps of their Master as our first Fathers. Could anything bring greater pressure to bring us to imitate them! Jesus, our Founder, the Apostles, our forerunners, our first Fathers! And it is the Church that tells it to us, it is Peter through the mouth of Leo who says it! let us prostrate ourselves, respectfully listen, wonder in silence. Let us swear to be faithful, to become worthy of our great vocation: *Jam dictum est missionarios, quantum humana patitur fragilitas, imitari debere in omnibus exempla Christi Domini, PRAECIPUI SOCIETATIS INSTITUTORIS, necnon Apostolorum NOSTRI PROGENITORUM.*<sup>65</sup>

So one must live their life, exercise their ministry, practise their virtues? There is no room for doubt: *Tantium exemplarium imitationi inhaerentes, unam vitae suae partem debunt orationi, recollectioni interiori et contemplationi in abscondito domus Dei quam simul inhabitabunt.*

*Alteram vitae suae partem exteriori impendent acriter ministerio, nempe missionum, praedicationis, confessionum excipiendarum, catechizandorum rudium, juventutis dirigendae, aegrotantium et carceribus detentorum visitationis, spiritualium exercitationum, aliorumque hujusmodi operum.*

<sup>65</sup> The texts that follow come from the third chapter, paragraphs 1: de Caritate, and 2: De sacramentis.

*Verumtamen, tam in missionibus quam in interiore domus, studebunt praesertim in religiosae perfectionis semitis progredi: humilitatem potissimum colent, paupertatem, sui ipsius abnegationem, mortificationem spiritus, etc., uno verbo, INSTAR CHRISTI DOMINI (and always Jesus Christ as model), instar Christi Domini odorem amabilium ejus virtutum ubique diffundent.*

Intimately united with Jesus Christ, their head, they will be as one among themselves, his children, most closely united by the bonds of the most ardent charity, living always under the most perfect obedience to acquire the humility that is so necessary for them: [p. 11].

[Fraternal charity and humility].

*Arctissimis charitatis vinculis connexi*, there must be no sulks among them, they must not hurt one another by signs of indifference or coldness, *arctissimis Charitatis vinculis connexi, omnes sanctae obedientiae sub superiorum regimine, exacte subjiciuntur.* It is not talking here only of the Superior General. What is to be said then of grumbling, prejudices? *Quo fiet ut humilitatis virtutem sibi efficiant familiarem, quam ...* in submitting with simplicity to the one chosen among their brothers to represent Jesus Christ, to command in his name, for him to be obeyed exactly *exacte* and for one to acquiesce with the humility that is infinitely necessary in their case, *ut humilitatis virtutem sibi efficiant familiarem, quam a Deo postulare non cessabant veluti summopere necessariam in periculoso quod exercent ministerio.*

And here is the reason: *Cum enim uberrimi fructus ex ipso (ministerio) oriantur, timendum est ne insignes effectus quos sola parit gratia, quorumque proinde omnis honor in Deum referendus, laqueo interdum essent intensissimo missionariis imperfectis qui, primariam hanc, [et] perneccessariam virtutem minime coluissent.* The proud have had their warning!

*Quapropter missionarii de ultimo semper loco sibi complacent, et abjectissima sine ostentatione, domus ministeria demisso et prompto animo exercebunt.* Why are Superiors never to be questioned? *Cum confusi et contempti fuerint gaudebunt:* Second degree of humility: *dum vero piis suis desideriis impares erunt abjectiones*, third degree, *a superiore occasionem postulabunt humiliationum.*

But if the superior fails to put his subjects to the test, which ought to be a subject of reproach for him if he does not, the Rule in part supplies for him: *cum missionarii vilissima domus ministeria obire maxime sibi honori*

*vertere debeant*, see what the Rule thinks about humility and humiliations! *humilitatis comparanda gratia, singuli, ne presbyteris quidem exceptis, mensae deserviant in ordine vicis suae et in refectorio legent. Superior ipsemet*, etc.

These things are all precious. They are eminently suited to keep us in the spirit of our vocation, to have us acquire new virtues and the most abundant merits; that is why the Rule insists that the missionary, especially one who has rendered the most striking [p. 12] services to the Church, procured the most glory for God and saved the greatest number of souls in the exercise of the holy missions, hasten joyfully into the bosom of our communities there to make himself forgetful of men and renew himself by the practice of obedience and humility and all the hidden virtues, in the spirit of his vocation and the fervour of religious perfection, without neglecting his other duties: *Peracto missionum tempore, [in] domus eorum sanctae receptum, laetantes, revertentur missionarii, ut debito tempore spiritum propriae vocationis renouent, legem divinam meditentur, Scriptureae Sacrae studio, sanctorumque Patrum, theologiae dogmaticae et moralis, aliarumque ecclesiasticae scientiae partium incumbant. Studebunt insuper novas ad proximas missiones parare materias.*

And as if the Rule wanted to compensate them for the time their holy ministry obliged them to live in the midst of the world albeit to enter into combat with it, it safeguards them by these prescriptions from the importunity of those who dwell there: *Nil illis cum mundo, quem omni cura devitantes, haud facile ad se patientur habere accessum.* Always however within the limits of our vocation which does not seek to make us into monks: *Quod minime obstat, quin varia a Constitutionibus praescripta zeli ministeria, in suis ecclesiis aliisve propriae residentiae locis, implere valeant.*

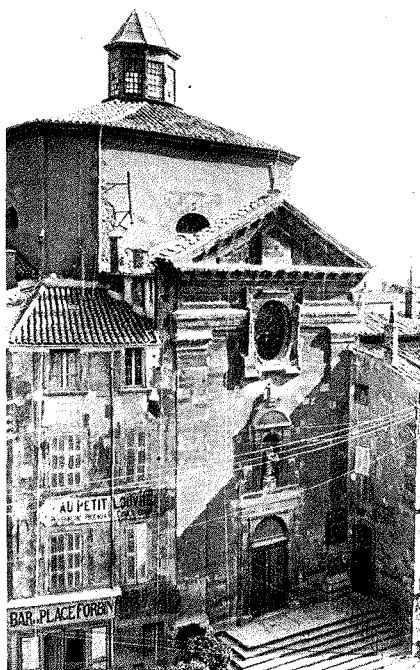
Living like this one is sure of pleasing God and then there is no obstacle to one approaching the Saviour, uniting oneself with him by the Sacrament of his love in the daily offering of the holy Sacrifice. This is what the Rule desires for all the priests of the Institute: *Ita vivant presbyteri.* This desire of the Rule will be realized if one lives in conformity with the principles inculcated above, *ita vivant ... ut singulis diebus sacrum facere digne possint (De Sacramentis).*

Those who are not yet priests being deemed no less faithful observers of the Rules than they [p. 13] and filled with the same spirit are also called

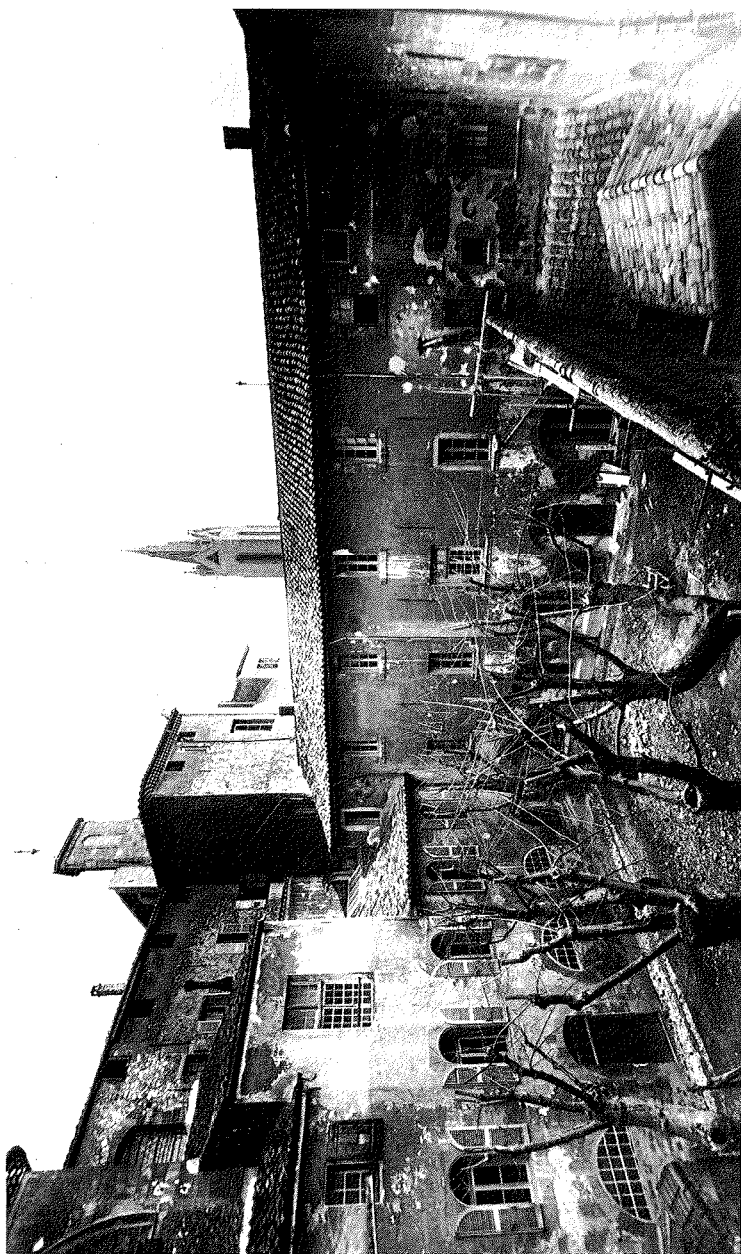
to frequent reception of the Eucharist, a recompense for their fidelity and powerful means to keep them equal to their duties: *qui sacerdotio nondum sunt insigniti, sacram communionem suscipient singulis diebus dominicis, festis de praecepto, et feriis quarta ac sexta cujusque hebdomadis.*

*Diebus dominicis, festis de praecepto, et feriis quarta ac sexta cuiusque hebdomadis,* reconcile that with tepidity, with the least voluntary breaking of the Rules! That is inconceivable. If one meets with Oblates who have not understood this, they are to be put with no hesitation on the rations of the imperfect. This article of the Rule is not for them, or to put it better, if they persevere in this state, they are not for the Congregation.

The inside of the church of The Mission in Aix, where Father de Mazenod often celebrated Mass and preached from 1816 to 1823.



The church of The Mission in Aix (exterior).



Inner courtyard of the former Carmelite monastery in Aix, the mother-house of the Oblates since 1815-1816.

## 1832 - 1856

### 164. [To Mr. Cailhol, canon secretary of the diocese of Marseilles].<sup>1</sup>

*Alone in Rome, Father de Mazenod awaits in prayer his appointment to the episcopate; it is slow in coming.*

[Rome,] September 27, 1832

Since the day Mr. Tempier left, I have been at home at my old lodgings, here I am more recollected and tranquil. You know I greatly appreciate the pleasure of dwelling under the same roof as Our Lord. I can find consolation with him for the tedious aspects of my position; as they get worse each day, I am always in need of fresh consolation and, in truth, I have only this good master for confidant. I find it hard to explain a delay at once so prolonged and so futile;<sup>2</sup> I am sometimes tempted to think there has been a change of mind and, as far as that goes, it is not the basic point that bothers me. If at least there were some explanation, but no, one must wait and be patient as if one had nothing else to do elsewhere. If you only knew how many times the thought has occurred to me to withdraw! So as not to succumb to this temptation, I have at times been obliged to give myself a good talking to; even so I do not dare to promise I will hold on much longer.

<sup>1</sup> Ms. Yenveux IV, 60.

<sup>2</sup> The Government was proposing to suppress once again the see of Marseilles, after the July 1830 revolution. So as to assure the administration of the sacrament of confirmation and the conferment of sacred orders after his death, Bishop Fortuné had sent Father Tempier to Rome, in the Spring of 1832, to have the first vicar general named bishop *in partibus*. The Pope agreed to this request. Leaving Marseilles on July 30, the future bishop arrived in Rome a little after August 15, but he was named Bishop of Icosia only on October 1. Father Tempier left Rome on September 20.

**165. [To Mr. Martin de Loirlieu, chaplain at  
St. Louis-des-Français, Rome].<sup>3</sup>**

*Father de Mazenod's feelings after his appointment as Bishop of Icosia. Lofty idea of the episcopate.*

[Rome,] October 4, 1832

If you knew the depth of my feelings of friendship towards you, you would conceive some idea of the chagrin I am experiencing at not seeing you, and above all in my present circumstances. It is not yet known in Rome, but the Pope has just named me Bishop of Icosia and apostolic visitor of Tripoli and Tunis. I shall be consecrated, unless some unforeseen obstacle arises, on Sunday the 14th of this month. My thought was that my first blessing would fall on you, as a long time ago you received the first absolution I ever gave in my priestly ministry. My best wishes will reach you wherever you are; but, my dear friend, do not forget me in your prayers, and, on the day of my consecration, say holy mass for me; you will readily understand my need. I am all alone here, and I assure you that poor human nature will be well and truly crucified; but I am not counting in vain on God in his goodness making up for all the heart will suffer by way of privations with the most abundant spiritual graces.

I have always viewed the episcopate with a different eye to most; and, now that I am elected and am so close to being invested with the plenitude of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, this profound feeling of veneration, this lofty idea that faith has established in my soul for this great dignity, would crush me and deprive me of all courage, all strength to carry on, if the Lord did not fill me with the sweetest hope and bring me to envisage this new coming of the Holy Spirit in myself as a time of renewal and mercy. It seems to me that this divine Spirit whom I have so grieved since it was communicated to me by the imposition of hands, at the time of my priesthood, is going to put everything right in my soul, establish his dwelling with such power that it will be impossible henceforth to escape from his inspirations. What will I say to you dear friend? I am speaking with you as if I were thinking to myself. For these ideas are familiar to me and I do not feel embarrassed with you. Goodbye, goodbye, I leave you to go and pray a little, for I must learn to acquit myself better of this great duty, the chief one of my future ministry.

<sup>3</sup> Copy: Rambert I, 610-611.



## 166. Retreat for the episcopate.<sup>4</sup>

*He recalls his retreat for ordination to the priesthood and his first years of ministry in Aix. He was better then than he is today. Trust in God's mercy; he promises to do His Will in everything. Powers he will receive from the Holy Spirit; obligations that will be imposed on him. Extracts from the Pontificale romanum with commentary.*

Rome, house of St. Sylvester at Montecavallo, October 7-14, 1832.

My first thought as I begin these days of retreat to prepare myself for the episcopate, to which I am called by the will of our Holy Father Pope Gregory XVI, goes back to the happy time of my preparation for the priesthood. That is already a long time ago; a large part of my life has gone by in that long interval between December 1811 and October 1832, but I still remember vividly both the graces it pleased the Lord to give me and my dispositions at the time, and the resolutions God inspired in me. I set aside a month to prepare myself to receive the imposition of hands and the great priestly character, I will have only eight days to dispose myself to receive the plenitude of the priesthood of Jesus Christ. That long retreat was preceded by several years of seminary life solely employed in the pursuit of knowledge of the divine science and the acquisition of the clerical virtues in the exact practice of a regular life. These eight days come after the highly active exercise of the apostolic ministry, the constant work of a two-fold administration carrying with it a frightening load of responsibility. Strictly speaking a year's recollection would not suffice and I have only a week. May God give me the grace to make good use of it!

[p. 2] In these first moments of my retreat, I come up against an altogether singular obstacle to devoting myself seriously before God to the great topic that calls for my complete attention, namely, an involuntary mental state that persists in seeing as a dream everything that has happened up to now with regard to my election to the episcopate, and all the preparation that has gone into accomplishing this great work of the Holy Spirit in me. I have in my hands the apostolic Briefs of my canonical institution, I have before my eyes the various dress items of my new estate, I devote myself seriously to the consideration of the lofty dignity to which, all unworthy as I am, I am elevated, the duties this dignity imposes on me, etc., but even so, it still seems as if it were all happening to someone else.

<sup>4</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-3.

As I make myself more familiar with the idea of what I already am by my election and what I am to become by my consecration, it will be advantageous to examine attentively the Holy Spirit's way of acting towards me both at the time of my ordination and during the course of my priestly ministry, and my cooperation on the one hand and my infidelities on the other hand, with the abundant communications of his grace. Thus I will ascertain the loss attributable to my fault, shed bitter tears before God, and full of trust in his mercy, I will dare hope that this living Spirit who is to come down into my soul will restore all I have let deteriorate, strengthen, consolidate, [p. 3] bring to perfection everything in me for me to become truly his right-hand man, the Elias of the Church, the anointed of the Lord, the priest according to the order of Melchisedech who has naught else in view but to please God by fulfilling all the duties of my ministry for the building up of the Church, the salvation of souls and my own sanctification. So may I be able to say with the apostle St. Paul: *Gratias ago ei qui me confortavit, Christo Jesu Domino nostro, quia fidelem me existimavit, ponens in ministerio, qui prius blasphemus fui. ... Superabundavit autem gratia Domini nostri, cum fide et dilectione, quae est in Christo Jesu. ... Regi autem saeculorum immortalis, invisibili, soli Deo, honor et gloria in saecula saeculorum. Amen* (1 Tim. 1:12-17).

I have been a priest for 21 years. I cannot presume that there is as much time left me to live as I have spent in the priesthood. I must look and see what the grace communicated me by the imposition of hands has yielded. The cooperation I have brought to it, the duration of the blessed consolations of the Holy Spirit, the cause of my infidelities and their baneful effects.

What beautiful years were those first years of my holy ministry. One year spent in the seminary as a priest, charged with inspiring in the others love for the clerical virtues and called to cooperate with holy collaborators to conserve and maintain the good traditions of our former Directors, the Emerys, Duclaux, Garniers, Montagnes [p. 4], expelled from their house, that we had to keep going in their absence. What beautiful years were those first two years I spent in Aix in the exercise of a ministry that was all charity, living within my house, with the help of my servant the good Trappist Brother Maur, in recollection, prayer and study; every moment I stole from external ministry, and the attention I gave to the youth and prisoners. If I had died then, the very death I had asked God to grant me from the time I became a priest, every day at the elevation of the chalice, I would have died a martyr of charity, and I would not have to reproach myself with so many

faults, infidelities, I would not have to weep over this state of lukewarmness into which I have been thrown by the innumerable occupations with which I have been overburdened, whether in the ministry of the holy missions, the foundation and direction of our Congregation, or in the administration of the diocese of Marseilles, in such difficult times and in the midst of such opposition. I have achieved a lot, it is true, overcome big obstacles, conquered insurmountable difficulties, good and very much good came of it. Yes, I cannot deny it, but it is at my own expense. I was better, or to phrase it better, incomparably less evil at the beginning of my ministry when I had still achieved practically nothing, than now when I have achieved much. What to conclude from [p. 5] this reasoning? That not only am I an unprofitable servant, but an unfaithful servant, that I may have done what I was obliged to do, but did not do it as I ought, since certainly the first condition of the work the head of the household imposed on me was that in carrying out his work I should pursue my own sanctification which one does not attain in our holy state otherwise than by advancing in perfection. So here I am arrived at my fiftieth year with empty hands, since I have been unable to enrich myself in my regular management of the treasures, even as I increased their value to the head of the household, but not with good interest as it should have been since, once again, as I look closely at myself, I find myself poorer today than the first day of my administration, *villicationis meae*.

And even so it is in this state of affairs I am called suddenly to receive the plenitude of the priesthood, elevated to the sublime episcopal dignity. My good God! If you had not accustomed me to the traits of your infinite mercy, if already you had not inspired in my heart a gentle trust, there would be every reason to draw back with horror. But no, you are my Father, it is you who since the tenderest days of my infancy have led me as it were by the hand. Everything you have done for me in the course of my life is too present to my memory, I feel again still today too vividly the effects not to count [p. 6] on your infinite goodness, not to throw myself with total abandon into your paternal bosom, fully resolved to do this time and always everything you demand of me, were it to cost me my life. Too happy to devote the few days left me to spend on earth to do your holy Will in bad times as in good, with the world's approval or condemnation, amidst consolations or overwhelmed with griefs. For I do not know what is awaiting me in the new ministry I am about to begin. As always, nothing happens to me that you have not willed, and my happiness and my joy will be always to do your Will.

That is where things stand, it is the feeling that predominates in my soul, an unlimited trust in the goodness of my God. I am a sinner, a very great sinner. After 21 years of minstry preceded by three years' preparation, after working more than many another, both myself and through a great number of cooperators whom I have set in motion, after succeeding in many undertakings conceived and carried out for God and the Church, I acknowledge myself to be without virtues and merits, and notwithstanding that I do not despair of my God's goodness, and I count always on his mercy, and I hope that I will finish by becoming better, that is, by dint of supernatural helps and habitual assistance of grace, I will acquit myself better of my duties and cooperate with the plans of the heavenly Father and his Son Jesus Christ, my most lovable Saviour, and the Holy Spirit who hovers over my soul prior to invading it again in a few days time. Amen, Amen, Amen.

[p. 7] That is enough reflecting on the past. The best thing is to abandon myself to God to apply myself specially to consider what is going to be done in me by virtue of the Most High, and the obligations I am going to contract on receiving the plenitude of the priesthood of J.C. *Quis sicut Dominus Deus noster, qui ... humilia respicit in coelo et in terra, suscitans a terra inopem et de stercore erigens pauperem ut collocet eum cum principibus ... populi sui* [Ps. 112:5-8]. There you have precisely what the Lord has done. These words will be engraved on my mind and I will keep them before my eyes all the days of my life: *suscitans a terra inopem et de stercore elevans pauperem ut collocet eum cum principibus populi tui*. Dust and ashes as I am, I am really going to be lifted up among the Princes of God's People, as I am going to be aggregated to the apostolic College, reclothed with the character they were clothed with, succeed to and participate in a share of their power: *Accipe Spiritum Sanctum. Episcopum oportet judicare, interpretari, consecrare, ordinare, offerre, baptizare, et confirmare*.

*Accipe Spiritum Sanctum*, here you see the incomparable grace, the great character, the lofty dignity of the pontiff of Jesus Christ ... *Accipe Spiritum Sanctum ... meditate on these words and try to understand as little imperfectly as you can what they mean*. It is not like the first time in the diaconate simply *ad robur*, it is not again simply as in the priesthood for the remission of sins or their retention *quorum remiseras peccata, remittuntur eis; et quantum retinueritis retenta sunt* [John 20:23]. That was already a lot, too much. But this time it is to be raised to the Order of pontiffs *ad Summi Sacerdotis ministerium*, to be anointed and consecrated

*in ordine Pontificali*, to [p. 8] enter into participation in the solicitude for all the Churches, to pass on in my turn the Holy Spirit to work towards the perpetuation of the priesthood in the Church of Jesus Christ, to judge, interpret, conserve, ordain, offer, baptize, and confirm, *Episcopum oportet judicare, interpretari, consecrare, ordinare, offerre, baptizare, et confirmare*.

Well may the Consecrating Bishop invite all the faithful to pray that God's infinite goodness may grant me the abundance of his graces! *Oremus, fratres carissimi, ut huic Electo, utilitati Ecclesiae providens, benignitas omnipotentis Dei gratiae suae tribuat largitatem.*

As for me is it excessive to abase myself with the thought of my own nothingness, prostrate myself face downwards to the ground, send up groans towards the Lord, implore his mercy, his almighty grace, the help of his right-hand, to invoke, hands joined, tears in the eyes, the Blessed Virgin my Mother, the holy Angels, my holy Patrons and all the saints of paradise and all the just on earth and even the holy souls in purgatory, for I am sure that even though they cannot merit, they can obtain by intercession.

*Accipe spiritum Sanctum: Episcopum oportet judicare, interpretari, consecrare, ordinare, offerre, baptizare, et confirmare.*

O All-Holy God, grant me the grace to penetrate this great mystery ... *de stercore erigens pauperem ut colloceat eum cum principibus populi sui.*

[p. 9] But this *oportet, etc.* does not teach me only what I am to become, the great privileges of my election, the dignity and the powers that will be conferred on me by the imposition of hands, in the pontifical order; it contains too all the obligations which are imposed on me. And even though one may fail to grasp that there is not a single one of the great powers conferred on the new bishop that do not relate, that are not correlative to several very important duties, it would suffice to listen to the Church who speaks through the mouth of the consecrating Prelate: *Et idcirco huic famulo, tuo, quem ad Summi Sacerdoti ministerium elegisti, hanc, quae-sumus, ... gratiam largiamrisus; ut quidquid illa velamina in fulgore auri, in nitore gemmarum, et in multimodi operis varietate signabant (apud veteres), hoc in ejus moribus, actibusque clarescat. Comple in sacerdote tuo ministerii tui summam, et ornamentis totius glorificationis instructum, coelestis unguenti rore sanctifica.*

Holiness in conduct, works shining forth with virtue, *hoc in ejus moribus, actibusque clarescat. Comple ... ministerii tui summam, et ...*

*coelestis ... rore sanctifica.* Here you see what the Church asks for her Pontiffs: brilliant holiness.

That the sacred anointing run down over all his person: *ut tui spiritus virtus et interiora ejus repleat, et exteriora circumtegat.* That he be filled interiorly with the virtue of the Holy Spirit, that he be in some manner as it were re clothed in it and enfolded in it as in a cloak. Could it be put more strongly? Let us go on and meditate [p. 10] on each word of this precious and solemn invocation:

*Abundet in eo constantia fidei, puritas dilectionis, sinceritas pacis. Sint speciosi munere tuo pedes ejus ad evangelizandum pacem, ad evangelizandum bona tua. Da ei, Domine, ministerium reconciliationis in verbo et in factis, in virtute signorum, et prodigiorum.* That is self-evident, O my God! When one has had the happiness of exercising the evangelical ministry in the missions, even in the sacerdotal order!

*Sit sermo ejus, et praedicatio, non in persuasibilibus humanae sapientiae verbis, sed in ostensione Spiritus et virtutis.* An admirable lesson that I love to find again here after meditating on it in St. Paul and set down in another book dear to me under a variety of titles.

*Da ei, Domine, claves regni caelorum, ut utatur, non gloriatur potestate, quam tribuis in aedificationem, non in destructionem.*

*Utatur, non gloriatur.* No, I told myself this too long ago and have driven it too far home for me to need to dwell on it today.

*Quodcumque ligaverit super terram, sit legatum et in coelis; et quodcumque solverit super terram, sit solutum et in coelis. Quorum retinuerit peccata, retenta sint, et quorum remiserit, tu remittas.*

It is not without reason that these two texts are juxtaposed and recalled. He is priest and pontiff.

*Qui maledixerit ei, sit ille maledictus; et qui [p. 11] benedixerit ei, benedictionibus repleatur.*

The Church sides with her pontiff. She identifies herself with him.

*Sit fidelis servus et prudens, quem constituas tu, Domine, super familiam tuam, ut det illis cibum in tempore opportuno; et exhibeat omnem hominem perfectum. Sit sollicitudine impiger; sit spiritu fervens, oderit superbiam, humilitatem ac veritatem diligat, neque eam umquam deserat, aut laudibus, aut timore superatus.*

*Veritatem diligat, etc.* Yes, my God, I understand, you have given me a sense of this truth, give me the grace of always keeping its imprint and to be faithful to it.

*Non ponat lucem tenebras, nec tenebras lucem, non dicat malum bonum, nec bonum malum.*

No, may I never be dominated by an individualistic, proud or opinionated attitude, always simple in my faith, always united in doctrine, even opinion, and teaching with the Church and her visible Head the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

*Sit sapientibus et insipientibus debitor, ut fructum de profectu omnium consequatur.*

Poor, rough, ignorant people, dear children, object of my first concern in my priestly ministry, the Church commends you to me now I am a pontiff. Ah! you will by no means be forgotten, you will always be the most precious portion, I do not say of my flock, I do not have one as such, but that my care will embrace in every place where I may be summoned to exercise my ministry.

[p. 12] *Tribuas ei, Domine, cathedram episcopalem, ad regendam Ecclesiam tuam et plebem sibi commissam.*

What can such words mean, addressed to a bishop of Icosia? Icosia is Mauretania Caesariensis. This province is inhabited by Turks.

But what if Icosia is Algiers as the geographers claim? Ah, hearken Lord to the wishes of the Church, and grant me this episcopal see, give me especially this people which has aroused so much interest in me since their city was conquered and I have entertained the hope of carrying there myself and in the person of our missionaries the cross of Jesus Christ. Since then I have not ceased to offer prayers for this people. Today I have become their pastor, at least in name as jurisdiction is still reserved to the Head of the Church. Could it be in view of a special plan of your Providence that this circumstance has come about? I am quite unable to say. All I know is, that be it how it may, I would like to be of use to this people.

*Sis ei auctoritas, sis ei potestas, sis ei firmitas. Multiplica super eum benedictionem, et gratiam tuam; ut adexorandam semper misericordiam tuam, tuo munere idoneus, et tua gratia possit esse devotus. Per Dominum Nostrum Jesum Christum, etc.*

Yes, be everything in me, be everything for me, and may your blessing as well as your grace multiply itself to the point of infinity so I may become ready to fulfill worthily my great ministry of which the Church has just made me understand the responsibility precisely through what she asks of God for me in this prayer.

[p. 13] Let us end by hearing out the Church's lessons and then make our resolutions.

*Accipe baculum pastoralis officii, ut sis in corrigendis vitiis pie saeviens, iudicium sine ira tenens, in fovendis virtutibus auditorum animos demulcens, in tranquillitate severitatis censuram non deserens. Amen.*

*Accipe annulum, fidei scilicet signaculum, quatenus sponsam Dei, sanctam vicelicet Ecclesiam, intemerata fide ornatus, illibate custodias. Amen.*

*Accipe Evangelium, et vade, praedica populo tibi commisso; potens est enim Deus, ut augeat tibi gratiam suam, qui vivit et regnat in saecula saeculorum. Amen.*

*Imponimus, Domine, capiti hujus Antistitis et agonistae tui, galeam munitionis, et salutis; quatenus decorata facie, et armato capite, cornibus utriusque Testamenti terribilis appareat adversariis veritatis; et te ei largiente gratiam, impugnator eorum robustus existat, qui Moysi famuli tui faciem ex tui sermonis consortio decoratam lucidissimis tuae claritatis, ac veritatis cornibus insigneisti, et capiti Aaron Pontificis tui tiaram imponi jussisti. Per Christum Dominum Nostrum.*

*Circumda, Domine, manus hujus ministri tui munditia novi hominis, qui de coelo descendit, ut quemadmodum Jacob dilectus tuus, pelliculis haedorum opertis manibus, paternam benedictionem, oblato patri cibo, potuque gratissimo, impetravit, sic et iste, oblata per manus suas hostia salutari, gratiae tuae benedictionem impetrare mereatur. Per Dom. etc.*

*Oremus. Deus, omnium fidelium pastor, et rector, hunc famulum tuum, quem Ecclesiae tuae praeesse voluisti, propitius respice, da ei, quaesumus, verbo et exemplo, quibus praeest, proficere, [p. 14] ut ad vitam, una cum grege sibi credito, perveniat sempiternam. Per Christum, etc.*

This cross, this crozier is given me as the sign of spiritual power for me to chase out vice with a severity tempered with gentleness, to judge with equity, rousing this man's virtues and reprimanding that one's trespasses.



This ring is placed on my finger as the seal of the faith I must profess and the fidelity I must observe towards the Church, Jesus Christ's holy Spouse.

This book of the holy Gospels is confided to me so that in conformity with my vocation or rather with the mission given me, I go out and preach the good news of salvation to the people with whom I am charged.

This mitre is placed on my head as a helmet of salvation, so that with my face adorned with this ornament, and my head armed with the power of the two Testaments, I may become terrible and formidable in the eyes of the adversaries of truth, and that by the help of grace I may always give them battle with both strength and success.

Lastly my hands are clothed with these gloves, image of the purity of the new man who has come down from heaven that the gifts, oblations and sacrifices which will be offered by me, may find favour and acceptance with God and that I may draw down on myself and the Church the most abundant blessings through the virtues of Jesus Christ Our Lord who, having taken the form of sin, offered himself for us to his heavenly Father.

How can I have got to the end of these lines, without the pen dropping from my fingers a thousand times. My God, who could ever [p. 15] attain just the virtues one ought to possess to respond worthily to the Church's designs? *Num parum vobis videtur esse generum regis* said David with less reason than I, *ego autem sum vir pauper et tenuis* (1 Sam.:23). *Ego autem sum mendicus et pauper* (Ps. 39:18) I repeat ... The Lord will have pity on me *Dominus sollicitus est mei*: I turn to him with the utmost confidence, for he is my help, my strength and all my hope; *adjutor ... et protector meus es tu, Domine, ne moreris* (Ps. 69:6). I am going for my part to set my hand to the task, and so that divine grace may stimulate my will and stir up my courage, I hope of his infinite goodness that having sown by an impulse of his mercy this seed in my soul, having thus begun the work he will deign to see it through to the end. *Ipse perficiat*. I want to cooperate seriously with all my power by a continual application and an assiduous effort to the advances I receive; I will neglect neither suffering nor sacrifices to acquire the virtues which I lack, and I will not put off until tomorrow to begin to lay the foundations for this new edifice, *ubi enim amor, ibi non est labor*. God is doing me the favour of being so penetrated with my obligations in this regard, I am so resolved to make a good beginning, to continue on well, to make a success with the help of grace of this last phase of my life that I [p. 16] take up the challenge with confidence as this retreat

comes to an end. 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. *Facile est ... in oculis [Domini] subito honestare pauperem* (Eccl. 11:23). You my God are my only hope and I know by experience that you are not lacking in case of need, *Adjutor in opportunitatibus* (Ps. 9). The glory of your holy name, your Church's honour are engaged, I must be worthy of my vocation, I must make certain of it by my works, that is to say may your grace make me equal to my duties, may it so uphold me until death, that in giving me eternal Life and so liberally rewarding me you might crown your own gifts. Amen.

### **Rule of Life**

laid down during the retreat preceding my consecration.

*Oportet ergo episcopum irreprehensibilem esse ... sobrium, prudentem, ornatum, pudicum, hospitalem, doctorem ...* 1 Tim. 3:2.

*Hoc praeceptum commendo tibi, fili Timothee, ... ut milites ... bonam militiam, habens fidem, et bonam conscientiam, quam quidam repellentes, circa fidem naufragaverunt ...* 1 Thes. 1:18-19.

*Praecipe haec et doce. Nemo adolescentiam tuam contemnat: sed exemplum esto fidelium, in verbo, in conversatione, in caritate, in fide, in castitate. ... Attende lectioni, exhortationi, et doctrinae. Noli negligere gratiam quae in te est, quae data est tibi per prophetiam, cum impositione manuum presbyterii. Haec meditare, in his esto, ut profectus tuus manifestus sit omnibus. Attende tibi, et doctrinae; insta in illis: hoc enim faciens, et teipsum salvum facies, et eos qui te audiunt. Seniore ne increpaveris: sed obsecra ut patrem; juvenes ut fratres, anus, ut matres; juvenculas, ut sorores, in omni castitate. Viduas honora, quae vere viduae sunt. ... Qui bene praesunt presbyteri, duplici honore digni habeantur, maxime qui laborant in verbo et doctrina. ... Adversus presbyterum accusationem noli recipere, nisi sub duobus vel tribus testibus. Peccantes coram omnibus argue, ut et caeteri timorem habeant. Testor coram Deo, et Christo Jesu, et electis angelis, ut haec custodias sine praejudicio, nihil faciens in alteram partem declinando. Manus cito nemini imposueris, neque communicaveris peccatis alienis. Te ipsum castum custodi. Noli adhuc aquam bibere, sed modico vino utere, propter stomachum tuum et frequentes tuas infirmitates.*

*... Radix enim omnium malorum est cupiditas. ... Tu autem ô homo Dei, haec fuge: sectare vero justitiam, pietatem, fidem, charitatem, patientiam, mansuetudinem. Certa bonum certamen fidei; apprehende vitam aeternam, in qua vocatus es, et confessus bonam confessionem [coram] multis testibus; praecipio tibi coram Deo qui vivificat omnia, et Christo Jesu qui testimonium reddidit sub Pontio Pilato, bonam confessionem: ut serves mandatum sine macula, irreprehensibile, usque in adventum Domini nostri Jesu Christi, quem suis temporibus ostendet beatus et solus potens, Rex regum, et Dominus dominantium. ... O Timothee, depositum custodi, devitans profanas vocum novitates, et oppositiones falsi nominis scientiae, quam quidam promittentes ... exiderunt. Gratia tecum. Amen (1 Tim. 4: 11-16; 5: 1-3, 17, 19-23; 6:10-15, 20-21).*

One would have to copy out in their entirety St. Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus. One might as well read them in the Scriptures.

### **167. To Mrs. de Mazenod, rue Papassaudy, n. 2, in Aix, Bouches-du-Rhône, France.<sup>5</sup>**

*His regret at being consecrated bishop far from his mother and family. United in prayer.*

Rome, October 13, 1832.

I leave to your imagination, my darling beloved mother, the chagrin I experience at being separated from you in such an important event in my life, when it would be so consoling for me to receive your blessings and then pour out on you the first and most abundant of those it will be in my power to bestow in the sublime order to which I am going to be raised tomorrow. It is the greatest sacrifice that could be imposed on me, and I offer it to the Lord in compensation for what I lack in virtue to be worthy of the lofty vocation to which I am called by the wholly gratuitous mercy of God. However, my dear mother, you must know that, although you are very far away from me, you are always present to me, and that tomorrow especially there will be no distance at all in my mind, surrounded as I shall be by all those who have the right to my affection and on whose concern I am counting. So, abstracting itself from the crowd of curious onlookers my eyes may see, my soul absorbed in God will see you in him, you, my darling sister, her children, my venerable uncle and the whole family, my

<sup>5</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. FB I-9.

children in Jesus Christ, my friends worthy of that title that it is not my wont to bestow lightly. If, as I hope, my letter of the 4th arrived in time, tomorrow morning we shall all be united in Jesus Christ in the most intimate way, as you will all be united with the Sacrifice during which I shall be consecrated, by communion and by the masses that will be said for my intention. And this is how I shall find consolation for my isolation from all I love.

It is only nature that suffers. I feel it perhaps more than most; but there is profit for the soul, it is always so much gained. Goodbye, my most dear and beloved mother. I am taking advantage of today's post, Saturday, so as not to have to defer writing you until Tuesday. I go on my knees to ask your maternal blessing, and hug you with all the tenderness that you know I have for you. Hugs too for Eugenie and her children, I am too making a big sacrifice in depriving myself of seeing Louis this year. I do not advise you to write as in all probability there will not be time for me to receive your letter here. Goodbye.

## 168. [To Bishop Fortuné de Mazenod, bishop of Marseilles].<sup>6</sup>

*Gratitude towards his uncle and regret at not having been consecrated by him. The ceremony was "dignified, majestic, edifying." Resolve to seek only God's will.*

Rome, October 14, 1832.

If I had been at liberty to follow my heart's desire, the moment I descended from the altar I would have taken up my pen to render you my first act of homage and say again the words I had just addressed to the consecrating Bishop<sup>7</sup> who represented your person to me: *ad multos annos*. It was high time too I expressed my gratitude towards you, and gave expression to my feelings of filial affection which, while admitting no increase, I experienced in a very lively way even in the midst of the abundant spiritual consolations it pleased the Lord to pour out in my soul on this memorable day. Really it was a great chagrin for me and the occasion, I hope, of much merit to have been deprived of the happiness of being consecrated by you

<sup>6</sup> Ms. Yenveux III, 229; Rambert I, 613-614; Rey I, 548.

<sup>7</sup> Cardinal Odescalchi, prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. The episcopal ordination took place on October 14.

and surrounded by my whole family and our dear friends. In your very real absence, I tried to make up for it in spirit by being united with you in the prayers you must all have been offering for me. This great privation apart, which could not but be felt by me, everything went wonderfully well. It even seems that thanks to the tangible and wholly gratuitous outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit this ceremony will live on in the memory, it was so dignified, majestic, edifying: the poor elect was under the influence or impression of the superabundant grace of God, so good, so generous; and when his emotion which it was impossible for him to hide was perceived, both by the consecrating bishops and those assisting, they shared the same feeling and tears flowed from all eyes in the midst of this general recollection which I was assured prevailed far more than it does usually.

You would have been touched to see the Archbishop of Ravenna,<sup>8</sup> first assistant, not only give me an embrace, as did too the other assistant, his Grace the Archbishop of Chalcedon,<sup>9</sup> each time he had to give the kiss of peace, but show me too a wholly tender sign of affection by planting a kiss on both cheeks so as to give me a double kiss, the sentiment behind which I wholly appreciated. The impression, so it seems, was so profound that the priests and even the Cardinal's retinue, who are well-used to the Church's beautiful ceremonies, as they emerged from this one, came to kiss my hand several times, not just as a formality, as it is usually done, but with a really evident expression of a profoundly felt emotion. There, then, my dear uncle, you have the consolations that God in his goodness deigned to grant me along with others of a more hidden nature, to strengthen me no doubt against the tribulations that are reserved for me. I face them without defiance or fear. The Lord gave me the grace during my retreat to make a very firm resolve to will only what he wills in times of prosperity and adversity alike. I am penetrated to the depths of my soul with the sublimity of the character and the grandeur of the dignity conferred on me; I have established myself, with the help of grace, in the disposition to fulfill always all the resulting duties, for the glory of God, the honour of the Church, the service of neighbour and my own sanctification. Armed in this fashion one is strong, especially when one looks to God for everything and for nothing from oneself whose nullity and powerlessness have more than ever come home to me. Please continue, my dear uncle, to come to my aid with the

<sup>8</sup> Bishop C. Falconieri.

<sup>9</sup> Bishop L. Frezza, secretary of the Congregation for Extraordinary Affairs.

help of your prayers; my own, quite feeble as they are, are due you by too many titles for you not to feel you can count on them.

Affectionate greetings with all the tenderness of a nephew and a wholly devoted son.

+ Ch. Jos. Eugene, Bishop of Icosia

## **169. [Examination of conscience for annual confession. Perfection].<sup>10</sup>**

*Detailed examination of conscience: daily actions, duties as a Christian, religious, superior, bishop, and vicar-general.*

[1832-1837]<sup>11</sup>

Examen for annual confession:

On all every-day actions: getting-up, prayers, meditation, preparation for mass, mass, thanksgiving, study, time-wasting, scripture reading, spiritual reading, examination of conscience, evening prayer, rosary, divine office, confession, sacramental penance, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, administration of the Sacraments, God's commandments, love of God, love of neighbour, capital sins, works of spiritual/temporal mercy, good works, inspirations, vigilance over oneself and one's senses, good left undone or evil committed, purity of intention, zeal, meekness, humility, mortification, *lapsus linguae*, obedience, chastity, concupiscence of the flesh, concupiscence of the eyes, pride of life, duties of perfection, observance of the Rules, infidelities, good example, fidelity, exactitude, fervour, watchfulness, vigilance over everything and everyone, correction, reprimand, insistence on duty without acceptance [of persons], or weakness.

General duties of a Christian, duties of a simple religious, duties of a superior as concerning myself, as concerning subjects, duties of a priest, duties of a vicar-general, duties of a suffragan bishop. Examination on the first point should cover all the commandments of God and the Church, the capital sins, natural bad tendencies, dominant faults, disordered affections. Examination on the second point should bear on correspondence with the

<sup>10</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-3.

<sup>11</sup> Undated page, the context indicates it was written between 1832 and 1837.

grace of vocation, infidelities, resistences. It should cover the observance of the vows and the Rules; examine especially the obligation of tending to perfection by this path and not only faults of commission but those of omission.

\* \* \*

Perfection.

1. One must desire it; 2. urge one another on to it; 3. faithful to the pious exercises that bring us to it; 4. hunger for it; on this hangs all our progress, without that nothing; 5. nothing comes by forcing the heart: reply of St. Thomas Aquinas to his sister; 6. when one desires it one applies oneself with ardour to acquiring what one desires; 7. God fills with graces, says St. Ambrose, *esurientes, etc.; quia satiavit animam inanem, animam esurientem satiavit bonis* [Ps. 106:9]. *Daniel vir desideriorum* [Dan. 10:11]. Wisdom sits at the door for those who seek her.

But *si quaeritis quaerite* [Is. 21:12]. *Qui edunt me adhuc esurient*, etc. [Eccl. 24:29]. We only properly appreciate spiritual things when we have had a taste of them. The desire to profit is an indication one is in a state of grace, says St. Bernard. Not to go forward is to go backwards; we can only stop ourselves going downwards by ever driving ourselves upwards (St. Augustine). All the saints say as much: to dwell in J.C., keep abreast of him (St. John).

## 170. [To Bishop Yenni, Bishop of Lausanne and Geneva].<sup>12</sup>

*He wants to be a bishop after God's own heart. Request for prayers.*

Marseilles, January 8, 1833

My Lord,

Not only do I acknowledge that I am your diocesan as you are so good as to observe in the letter I am to my distress all too late in answering, but

<sup>12</sup> Autograph draft, Rome, arch. de la Post.: L. Yenni — Mazenod. Bishop Yenni, on a visit to the Oblate house of Billens, had written on November 6, 1832: "It is from the bosom of your family where I have just learned of your elevation to the episcopate that I hasten to write. I cannot tell you, Monsignor, the consolation and joy this happy news brings to birth in my heart. Since you are the head of this house, you are also by the same title my diocesan ..."

you are my master and the model I would like to be able to imitate in my conduct throughout my life. I earnestly ask God for this grace in his goodness, for I truly want to be a bishop after his heart. You know too well, My Lord, the cost of such a favour to refuse me your help, by your prayers, in obtaining it, with this in view I ask you for a small mention each day in your *memento*. You will not find me ungrateful.

There is no need for me to reiterate all my thanks for the goodness you continue to show towards our dear Billens community. ...<sup>13</sup>

### **171. [To Bishop L. Frezza, secretary of the Congregation for Ecclesiastical Affairs, in Rome].<sup>14</sup>**

Most Reverend and Esteemed Lord,

The Holy Father has put my obedience to a severe test: to set out and set out immediately, to leave the diocese in the middle of the pastoral visitation, to set out I might say notwithstanding an uncle very advanced in age, who in his old age leans on me and relies on my judgment in the government of his diocese, the length of the journey, the expense, family opposition, and who knows what besides? I have thought it my duty to impose silence on all these considerations at the voice of the Sovereign Pontiff who invites me urgently to set out immediately to receive some news which touches the good of the Church.

Short of coming on the wings of the wind, it would not be possible to hasten faster than I have done. As soon as your letter and that of the Cardinal prefect of Propaganda were delivered, I booked a place on the first steamship ready to depart. ...

When your *illustrissime* Lordship informs His Holiness that I have answered your letter and am setting out without delay, I would not want you to explain that this act of obedience is costing me a lot humanly speaking. It is enough before God that I overcome my repugnance and obey as

<sup>13</sup> Oblate house, founded 1830, closed 1837.

<sup>14</sup> Orig.: Italian: Rome, A.S.V., Aff. Ecc. straordinari, 87 F. III. French translation in Yenveux III, 190. The founder did not know the Pope was calling him to Rome because the French Government did not accept his appointment as Bishop of Icosia and did not want him any longer in Marseilles. The Prefect of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide had already written him in April asking him to go and make a visitation in North Africa, as apostolic visitor for Tunisia and Tripoli. He thought he was going to be dispatched there or for some mission in America (Letter to Father Courtès, July 31, 1833).



promptly as if it were costing me nothing. By word of mouth I will give you a further explanation, you in whom I have every confidence. ...

+ Charles Joseph Eugene, Bishop of Icosia.

**172. [To Cardinal Thomas Bernetti, Secretary of State for Pope Gregory XVI].<sup>15</sup>**

*The Bishop of Icosia did not promise his Excellency the French Ambassador he would reside in Aix. Bishop Fortuné recalled him to Marseilles where he is doing his work at peace with everyone. If the Holy Father orders him to withdraw, he will obey.*

Marseilles, January 18, 1834

Your Eminence,

It is quite inaccurate to say I *promised* His Excellency the Ambassador<sup>16</sup> to take up residence in Aix; but it is quite true to say that of my own accord I told him, as I did others too, that I was thinking I would stay in that town for as long as was necessary to see how things turned out. And in fact, once arrived at Genoa, I left the boat and took the land route to get to Aix by way of Nice, Fréjus, Brignoles, etc. ... But I had scarcely reached Aix when I received a letter from His Lordship the Bishop of Marseilles inviting me to rejoin him; and that I might reach his side without delay, His Lordship even had me brought by carriage, as he judged it unfitting and would create a bad impression if on arriving back in France after an absence of four months, I did not go immediately and present myself to him. His Lordship was all the more justified in his decision as he had for his part written the Minister of Worship to protest the arbitrary decree that did injury to the inalienable right of his spiritual jurisdiction and it would contradict his position to detain me artificially away from my post.

<sup>15</sup> Orig.: Italian: Rome, A.S.V., rubr. 261, an. 1834. French translation in Rey I 581-582. Calumnies, humiliations, journeys, exile: many in number were the sufferings heaped on Bishop de Mazenod by this Icosia affair. His correspondence on the subject abounds, we publish here only a few letters where his obedience to the Pope is evident. For all the details on this matter, and many extracts from his correspondence, see Rey I, 561-613, 640-673 and Leflon II, 429-516.

<sup>16</sup> Lord Florimond de Fay, Marquis of Latour-Marbourg.

So I came to Marseilles as it was my duty to do and I have been residing here in all tranquillity for more than a month. I have even resumed my normal relations with the civil authorities and in particular with the Prefect, to whom during this month I have made no less than four if not five visits to transact with him business concerning the diocese.

The New Year's Day visits had me displayed to the whole town alongside his Lordship the Bishop of Marseilles. I went personally to visit the town notables and the authorities. My presence here has surprised no-one and no-one breathed a word of anything. The Prefect, in my presence and that of others, indignantly protested the imputation that he had written against me; and if I may be permitted to repeat the expression he used, I may say he referred to me as "*an intelligent and sensible man.*" This opinion of the first magistrate of the department should suffice to convince His Excellency the Ambassador that my presence in Marseilles has not had the ill-effects he imagines, consequent on suspicions he has made up for himself and prejudices he is not willing to forgo.

Your Eminence may be the judge if, to comply with a strange and supremely false idea of his Excellency the Ambassador, I can take flight like a poltroon or malefactor, without even the shadow of a reason, to take myself off to Aix, where I have nothing to do. A departure of the kind would be seen as an exile all the more extraordinary and inconceivable in that clearly it would be the head of the Church who would be imposing it, as our laws do not give this right even to the King in respect of the most wretched of citizens. This would be a scandal for the two dioceses where my political and ecclesiastical position, my family ties and services rendered have earned me esteem, I would even be so bold as to say general affection.

I have therefore come to the conclusion, and it is likewise the opinion of the Bishop of Marseilles, that I could not do less than explain these circumstances to Your Eminence, to enable you to judge if it was open to me in this state of affairs, without loss to my honour and reputation, without compromising the rights of the Church I defend, without prejudicing the interests of the Bishop of Marseilles and my own, to flee Marseilles and go and hide in Aix.

It might perhaps have been a possibility before I arrived here; but at present it seems to us impossible that the Holy Father would wish to persist in giving a like counsel.

Even so, after this faithful exposition of the situation, if the Holy Father speaks, I will always consider it my duty to act in conformity with his will, cost whatever sacrifice it may.

Full of gratitude for the wholly friendly attentions Your Eminence has displayed in my regard, please accept my thanks and be pleased, etc., etc.

+ Charles-Joseph-Eugene, Bishop of Icosia.

### 173. [Baron D. Papassian, in Rome].<sup>17</sup>

*So as not to cause pain to the Pope, Bishop de Mazenod renounces obtaining justice through the courts in the Icosia affair.*

Marseilles, May 14, 1834

... Since the Sovereign Pontiff is pained by the idea of this process in the courts, I *renounce* obtaining justice by this means. You are at liberty to say what I have decided in this respect, and that I place everything in the hands of the Holy Father.

But this does not go so far as agreeing to leave France, it would seem to me it would not be so easy to reenter as the last time. It is also to do oneself too much violence to condemn oneself, for the satisfaction of a government, to a perpetual exile. Likewise I am not decided to go and stay outside Marseilles, where most of my family are now situated, where I am indispensable to my uncle, where even the authorities continue to deal with me as if I had not ceased to be acknowledged as vicar general; really it

<sup>17</sup> Copy: Marseilles, arch. de l'archevêché, "lettres administratives" of Bishop de Mazenod, vol. 2, p. 517; Rey I, 590.

On September 13, 1833, Mr. Barthe, Minister of Worship, had written to Bishop Fortuné that his nephew was legally incapacitated from exercising any ecclesiastical function in France and to continue to fulfill the functions of vicar general which had ceased from the moment of his institution as bishop of Icosia. On his return to Marseilles, in December, Bishop de Mazenod decided to defend himself in the courts. The matter was going ahead rapidly, with a good hope of success, when Cardinal Bernetti first told him by letter on January 8, 1834, to stay in Aix (reply January 18, see preceding letter), then on March 21 let him know clearly, through Baron Papassian, that the court proceedings were non grata: "The sum of what both (Cardinal Bernetti and Bishop Capaccini) told me obliges me to advise you frankly to lay aside all thought of a court case. ... You would lose from that moment the support of Rome" (Rey I, 587-588). Bishop de Mazenod then desisted and wrote this letter dated May 14 in which he refutes the objections but agrees not to continue with the case. We publish here only the final paragraphs of the letter.

would be incomprehensible why I would go to live in another town; it would give rise to the worst impression: I would have the *semblance of having been sent away as a penance by the Pope*, while in reality I would be being persecuted by the government, which would seem not to have anything to do with it, and which would exploit the Sovereign Pontiff to punish me for not being to its liking.

The truth is *I am by no means hostile* to the government; I am doing nothing against it, although it might well be true that it does not fill me with enthusiasm. It is because I stay clear of politics and *am unassailable on that point* that the intervention of the Sovereign Pontiff is sought. I hope that this odious tactic will not succeed and that I will remain at my post. ...

#### 174. [To Cardinal Thomas Bernetti, Secretary of State].<sup>18</sup>

*Reply to the Cardinal concerning the circular sent to the French Bishops and the appeal to the royal court of Aix against loss of French citizenship. Obedience to the Pope.*

Marseilles, November 19, 1834

My Lord,

I received yesterday your letter of the 11th instant and hasten to send Your Eminence the explanations he is looking for and which, I trust, will win me the approval of His Holiness, concerning my actions in the affair under consideration. To that end I need scarcely do more than recall what I wrote myself to the Holy Father and to Your Eminence.

<sup>18</sup> Copy: Marseilles, arch. de l'archevêché, administrative letters of Bishop de Mazenod, vol. 2, p. 545.

By a decision dated August 10, 1834, Mr. Thomas, Prefect of Bouches-du-Rhône, had erased the name of Bishop de Mazenod from the electoral lists. By this the latter lost his rights of French citizenship and could be deported from France by the police. Some lawyer friends advised him to appeal, as soon as possible, before the Aix Court, as the time limits for doing so were extremely short (Rey I, 594-598). He did so on September 17 and, moreover, on October 1 Bishop Fortuné wrote a circular letter to the French Bishops on this matter. On September 27, the Bishop of Icosia informed Cardinal Bernetti of these latest events and of the necessity of entering his defense while there was yet time. On November 11, Bishop Capaccini, substitute at the Secretariat of State, expressed in the name of the Pope the desire to see the Bishop of Icosia make no use of the Bishop's letters and to desist from his appeal to the royal court of Aix.

It is true that I informed you at the time that, out of deference to His Holiness, I was minded not to pursue in the civil courts the redress of the wrong done me by the anti-catholic decision of the French Minister. It is also true that in writing on the 30th of August last, to the Sovereign Pontiff, I limited myself to informing him of the scandal brought about by the publicity which was the work of the government newspapers and tantamount to a commitment on the part of the civil authority to pay no heed to the appeals of the Holy See. I said nothing on that occasion of pursuing an action before the lay Judges because in all truth I was resolved not to initiate anything of the kind.

But never did it enter into my head and never did I commit myself to not opposing an attack in the courts, if it were directed against me. That is what I had the honour of outlining to Your Eminence in my last letter dated September 30 in which, when explaining that the courts were going to take up my case, I told you:

“That I had been unable, by my pronounced pacific attitude, to avoid the necessity of putting up my opposition to the aggression since the process that I sought to prevent was being brought against me ... , That there was no question of me attacking but of defending, etc., etc. ...”

In fact, it is not I who began the process, it is the Government. Although hit by an oppressive measure, I kept silent patiently, when suddenly, without my making any move towards it, without even any advance warning, I was formally notified of a judgment rendered against me, (the Prefect's decision has the character of a judgment) through which the loss of my French identity was decreed consequent to the acceptance, without the King's authorization, of an episcopal title *in Partibus*. After this, the initiation of the process without any participation of mine is plain to see. It is plain to see that I was driven either to accept the judgment as final and resign myself to all the extremely unpleasant consequences it entails, or to undertake my defence.

I felt duty-bound to pursue the latter course, following the advice of persons who are the most outstanding in wisdom and enlightenment in France, who long since adopted this position; immediately I hastened to inform Your Eminence, both of my decision and of the reasons which led me to it, and expressing at the same time my sincere regrets that the time limit fixed by the law did not allow me to await your comments and the commands of the Holy Father, since there remained barely a few days for me to put in my appeal in due time.

So it is evidently erroneous to say, as one reads in Your Eminence's letter, that *it is through my initiative that the action has come before the courts*; far from it, I have suffered everything to keep it, following the wishes of His Holiness, away from judicial debate; but since my adversary, unknown to me, chose to go this way, could I refrain from following suit? Was I bound to surrender to the mercy of my persecutors and give them henceforth a free hand to completely crush me? Love of peace and my keen desire to be in accord with the desires of the Holy See, did these impose on me absolute silence, complete inaction, a state so passive beneath the blows being delivered that it was not permitted me even to parry these blows, fatal to me though they should be? I cannot believe that my obligations were such as this.

So I have in no way been inconstant in my resolutions, I have kept my word faithfully and I dare say with perfect delicacy and entire submission to the Holy See, as is borne out by the care I took in my last letter to expose the kind of violence that was being done to me by the Government which had just placed me in an extremely difficult position from which I could escape by one way only. To be sure, I never thought that behaviour so submissive on the one hand and so strongly marked with moderation on the other, would earn me on the part of Your Eminence hurtful observations.

Nor did I think that the recourse on my behalf of His Lordship the Bishop of Marseilles, my uncle, to his French colleagues, could provoke the least complaint. ...

However since His Holiness does not wish me to make use of the supportive declarations of the Bishops, I renounce it. And furthermore: the pain with which the Holy Father views the continuation of the process brought against me and the desire I have to abstain from anything that could displease him, determine me to desist from my appeal, come of it whatever God wills; all the lawyers I have consulted guaranteed me a successful outcome; by my desisting, I am submitting to an iniquitous judgment rendered against me and to the baneful consequences it may have, but neither the advantages promised me, nor the drawbacks I have to fear could make me hesitate when it is a question of the will or even of a mere desire of the Head of the Church. I will inform the French Minister without delay of my desisting and then he will no longer have any pretext for evading the appeals of Your Court. it remains only for me to entrust myself to the benevolence of the Holy Father into whose hands alone I place my interest and my honour.

I beg you to accept, etc.

+ Charles Joseph Eugene, Bishop of Icosia.

## 175. [To Bishop L. Frezza, Secretary of the Congregation for Extraordinary Affairs].<sup>19</sup>

*In response to the communication of Bishop F. Capaccini, and so as not to give displeasure to the Pope, the Bishop of Icosia desists from his appeal to the Royal Court of Aix.*

Marseilles, November 28, 1834

[...] So as not to cause the least distress to the Holy Father, I have instructed my advocate to abandon my action and withdraw my appeal. But I was not the one who initiated this process, as Bishop Capaccini wrongly says, since a prior judgment entered against me (erasure from the electoral lists) at the instigation of the Government had gone against me; this sentence would have had immediate force as a final judgment, had I not appealed. So I repeat, it was not I but the Government who brought the action before the courts. The Pope was unhappy about it, he will no longer be so. My deference to his wishes has been total.

Bishop Capaccini is happily undisturbed in the Quirinal, he pays no heed to the quality and immensity of the sacrifice made by a Bishop who abandons his rights and disarms in the face of an astute and powerful enemy, quite ready to abuse his victory and walk all over me as he likes.

Enclosed is a copy of my letter to the Ministry of Worship.<sup>20</sup> In it you will see I leave everything and abandon myself to Divine Providence. I wish I could add “and to the benevolence of the Holy Father,” but I hope for little from that quarter. The Holy Father, if I understand him correctly, has placed no value on either my character or my services, which gave me a right to his protection, nor on the affection accorded me by Leo XII and Pius VIII. If persecution drives me into exile from my country and to withdraw to Rome, I know I may not count on either grace or favour; my reward must come from God.

I wish I had a less sensitive heart, I would love less, be less tied up in a host of things which affect me very deeply within and I would be happy.

<sup>19</sup> Copy: Rey I, 604; Rambert I, 689; Yenveux III, 163.

<sup>20</sup> Letter dated November 25, 1834.

**176. To Mrs. de Mazenod, rue Papassaudy, n. 2, in Aix.  
Bouches-du-Rhône.<sup>21</sup>**

*Devotion to the Blessed Virgin during the cholera epidemic.*

Marseilles, March 10, 1835.

You will have had our news, dearest mama, through the newspaper and the Pastoral Letter. We are now confronted by a quite ravishing spectacle. It is a holy explosion of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, which was displayed not only in the course of the journey down from the Mount to the cathedral, but is still going on with a sustained trust.<sup>22</sup> The cathedral, where the Blessed Virgin has been exposed, does not empty from five in the morning till seven in the evening. When I say it does not empty, the fact is the whole vast building is continually full, from the altar to the organ; we have let them invade the choir, which is constantly full of men. One cannot but weep for joy. So I have to tear myself away from this temple, and if pressure of business did not call me away, I would not leave, my heart bursts so amid this very wonderful devotion. I think the Lord cannot but allow himself to be touched nor his divine Mother fail to obtain us mercy. I do not know what will come of it. The fact is that during the daytime yesterday, instead of the huge number of cases that have been daily terrifying our quarter, we had only a single case; and St. Laurent, which is suffering as much as ourselves, had only two. It is a huge decrease. Let's hope. In the meantime, take a lot of care of yourself in Aix, for those who are exiting from Marseilles are going out there to die.

I have been much distressed to have no news from my sister. Your last letter gave me some assurance. Here we are all well. Goodbye.

<sup>21</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de las Post. FB I-9.

Cholera, which had already threatened Marseilles in 1832, spread rapidly from January 1835 onwards. There were nearly 100 deaths daily at the beginning of March.

<sup>22</sup> From March 8-12 the statue of N.C. de la Garde was exposed in the cathedral. On the 12th, there was a procession from the cathedral to the church of St. Martin where the Blessed Sacrament was exposed for nine days. These days of prayer ended with another procession on the 22nd (Cf. Pastoral Letter, March 6, 1835).



## 177. To Bishop Frezza, Secretary of the Congregation for Extraordinary Affairs.<sup>23</sup>

*Prayers to ask for the end of the cholera epidemic. Bishop de Mazenod rejoices over the fervour of the people of Marseilles and thanks the Lord for the humiliations endured in the Icosia affair.*

Marseilles, April 27, 1835

I will give you my news in brief. Cholera has not killed us all off. I confronted it as is my duty, if not without peril, at least without damage to my health. Every day I had to visit a number of the sick in the hospitals and private houses. God was always my help, and so not for me the palm, so much desired, of the martyrdom of charity.

God has been glorified in the public prayers we prescribed. The doctors were forecasting a frightful recurrence of the disease, and instead, as if to mock their predictions, God has sent it packing with a puff of wind; the epidemic came to a complete end with the novena of solemn adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. For me and all those with faith this is a clear miracle, more marvelous than that of the resurrection of a dead person. If the Holy Father is unaware of these things, you might speak of them, believe me you will not be guilty of exaggeration.

The two processions of the Blessed Sacrament, on the first and last days of the novena, each lasted five hours. My uncle, in light of his 85 years, left me to preside over the ceremonies. There were twelve thousand people, torches in hand, in the procession; and on the square, where the final benediction was given, more than eighty thousand people. You can just imagine the effect of so many voices during the *Tantum ergo*, in that huge church with the heavens as its cupola, and stretching as far as the eye could see; tears streamed down people's faces. From that moment I knew we were being heard. ...

It is a fine compensation for my sufferings to see God glorified in this way, so many souls converted, and our town healed by these all-powerful means employed by infinite mercy. Provided God be exalted, what does it matter if one remains humiliated, overlooked, abandoned by nearly everyone? I pray that in the eyes of men *vilior fiam, plus quam factus sum*. Ever

<sup>23</sup> Rambert I, 670-671, 698; Rey I, 621.

since I came into the world, God has led me by the hand; he has had me accomplish so many things for his glory, that I had reason to fear pride if men had perceived them and shown gratitude towards me; it is better for me that they be unjust and ungrateful; in this way God will be my sole reward, as he is already my sole strength, my only hope.

**178. To Bishop [Charles de Forbin-Janson], Bishop of Nancy and Toul, rue de Grenelle; faubourg St. Germain, in Paris.**<sup>24</sup>

*Human injustice towards Bishop de Forbin-Janson and Bishop de Mazenod; the latter seeks retirement and solitude. He commends Father Guibert who is on his way to Paris.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

At Notre Dame de l'Osier, July 16, 1835

It takes, my dearest Lord, an unusual turn of events to get two old friends, each with an implicit trust in their mutually-shared feelings of friendship, to write to one another. One would say that there is a whole sea to swallow before breaking once in a while a silence obstinately maintained on both sides. I do not know to what to attribute this phenomenon, but that is how it is. I may merely remark in passing that I am always the one to break the ice; it is true I am immediately rewarded with a friendly reply, but there the matter rests for a year or two, only to start afresh and then come again to an immediate halt. Meanwhile various striking things occur, and these must certainly be of considerable interest to those who love us, but public opinion can be left to convey them soon enough to our friend who apparently did not vividly grasp the injustice of a persecution that did all the same sicken him to the depths of his soul.<sup>25</sup> So it was you made your peace with the Government, named a coadjutor, refused, it is said, to come and govern our metropolis without my ever hearing a single

<sup>24</sup> Orig.: Ottawa, arch. Deschâtelets.

<sup>25</sup> An obscure sentence: it is not clear if Bishop de Mazenod is speaking of his own difficulties over the Icosia affair or of the problems of Bishop de Forbin-Janson in Nancy because of his opposition to the Government since July 1830.

word from you on all these things.<sup>26</sup> Anybody else would come to the conclusion, would he not, that he has been mistaken these past thirty years to think of you as a friend. But I am really yours and nothing that concerns you will ever find me indifferent. So tell me then how things are with you, and if you still have hopes of doing some good in a society that is little disposed to profit from it. As for myself, I am so weary of my fellow men that all my efforts go to arranging a place of solitary retirement, there to devote all my time to the business of my own salvation in the peace of a regular life divided between prayer and things I choose to do, no longer at the beck and call of all the people whose superior one is and who in actual fact are in a very real sense our masters.

I am having a foretaste of this happiness in the shrine where I have come to spend some weeks after carrying out our holy ministry in the dioceses of Aix and Avignon; it costs me a lot when I am prevented by urgent duties from realizing a project conceived a long time ago and for which I am yearning.

This letter will be delivered by Mr. Guibert, superior of the major seminary of Ajaccio. I commend this excellent priest as one of my dearest children, worthy of every esteem for his virtues and all his good qualities. You may speak to him freely of yourself and myself, I keep nothing hidden from him and he deserves your trust as he enjoys mine. I beg you to show him every kindness.

Goodbye, my dearest Lord, I send you my warmest greetings and ask for your holy prayers.

+ Ch. Jos. Eug., Bishop of Icosia

<sup>26</sup> Archbishop Jacques Raillon, Archbishop of Aix from 1832 to 1835, died on February 13.

## 179. [To Bishop Fortuné de Mazenod, in Marseilles].<sup>27</sup>

*Out of obedience to his uncle, Bishop de Mazenod stays away from Marseilles; he begs him to annul this veto.*

N.D. de Laus, August 4, 1835.

Judge, uncle, my sad position; banished from Marseilles at a time of such a great calamity,<sup>28</sup> knowing you to be in danger and not to be sharing it with you! Would to God I had gone back from Avignon; then I would have been on the spot at the time of the outbreak and I would not have budged from there. For my sins I had to be sitting ensconced in Dauphiné and be kept in suspense until you made the judgment I should not return. Your prohibition which was reiterated in every letter I received put my conscience in a state of doubt. On one occasion I was on the point of starting out. In fact, I left from N.D. de l'Osier in a great hurry, for I left that shrine on Saturday evening after sunset to get on to the Grenoble road, to Mr. de Cumane, a relative of Miss Louise de Bourcet<sup>29</sup> who was so kind as to bring me, at three o'clock in the morning, to Grenoble where I arrived at ten o'clock. I wanted to continue on my journey to Gap the same day; there was no place, one had to wait until the next day, which gave time for me to get your letter on my arrival in Gap which intimated to me once again your instructions not to come to Marseilles at this time.

You can well judge if danger was a sufficient motive to stop me flying to your side and sharing your lot and that of our worthy friends! But the insistence of your injunction made and still makes a greater impression on me than the thought of a danger that you would have me picture as being inevitable on arriving from a disease-free zone. It was not everything they were saying, both the Bishop and the Vicar General and all those around

<sup>27</sup> Copy Rey I, 636-638.

<sup>28</sup> So as to escape the notice of his adversaries in Marseilles and of the Government, the Bishop of Icosia spent the summer outside Marseilles, first in Aix and in Avignon to do the ordinations, and then in N.D. de l'Osier and N.D. du Laus. During the summer, the cholera epidemic raged anew in Marseilles (Pastoral Letter of July 16). The Founder wished to return as soon as possible, but his uncle opposed him in this. During this period, in Paris, Father Guibert succeeded in winning the reconciliation between the Bishop of Icosia and the Government.

<sup>29</sup> Madame Louise de Bourcet was the superior of the Ladies of St. Peter at Marseilles.

me, that held me back, but I could not defend myself from the fear of going against the will of God which in this situation could be made known to me only through your means. With you, the diocesan Bishop from whom I hold my faculties, my superior in the order of jurisdiction, wanting me not to come, on what ground, I asked myself, could I make a decision to do otherwise than what you ordered me to do? That way it would be by my own will I was going to expose myself to a death which would no longer be meritorious, if I met it outside the Providential order. That is what held me fast, the fear of sinning if I gave away my life in a act of formal disobedience to the only authority I am bound to recognize. It is still what holds me back against my will and at the cost of my rest which is disturbed with this necessity which has been imposed upon me.

I beseech you then to remove the veto which holds me. I would even say that once the fear of certain death, throwing away one's life, has passed by, and I shall just be running a risk, my obligation to obey will weigh less in the balance, because if I ought not in conscience expose myself to a practically certain death in the face of a formal precept which would not only have made me lose the merit of martyrdom, but would have made me responsible for the loss of the life that does not belong to me, once this order to stay was no longer being evidently compromised, I would no longer have the same qualms of conscience, it being only a question now of some risk. The proclamation of the Mayor of Marseilles is no proof of an inevitable danger for each person individually. It only points out the danger of a return *en masse* both for themselves and for those who stayed. I impatiently await your reply and send you my greetings with the filial affection you know is mine.

## **180. To Bishop de Forbin-Janson, Bishop of Nancy and Toul, rue de Grenelle, f[aubour]g St. Germain, Paris.<sup>30</sup>**

*The Icosia affair is over, but Bishop de Forbin-Janson is still banished from his diocese. They must not get discouraged: they are "men of the Church" and the salvation of souls is their "special vocation."*

Marseilles, December 11, 1835

I am really very grateful to you, my dear Lord and good friend, for deciding to be the first to give me some news that concerns me very

<sup>30</sup> Orig.: Ottawa, arch. Deschâtelets. An extract from this letter is published in P. Lesourd, *Mgr de Forbin-Janson*, 1944, p. 101.

closely. The thing has been told to me, I was to expect it, but I am really glad to know that the affair is over. It was the wish of the Sovereign Pontiff and of all my friends. Providence has visibly had a hand in it, and I bless him for that, accustomed as I am to allowing myself to be led by his paternal hand.

The details you give me about your affair make me tear my hair. How explain such furor, so implacable a hatred and who it is against?<sup>31</sup> Heavens, what merit these people are procuring you! But also what anguish, heartache for a pastor such as you! It is inhuman, diabolical; in fact only the devil could inspire such rage. I had hoped that the Government would succeed in making these erring people see sense, I see from your letter that it is not so. In this desperate state of affairs, why not come to Aix or Avignon?<sup>32</sup> My heart bleeds when I consider a prelate so zealous, capable of doing good, reduced to inactivity. You would certainly have done well in Aix, and certainly I would have overlooked nothing to facilitate the successful outcome of all your fine plans in a country where I have some influence. God in his goodness has perhaps other plans for you. All I ask is that you never create obstacles based on purely human considerations. We are above all and essentially men of the Church. The salvation of souls is our special vocation. It is the work towards which we must tend with all our efforts, the accidents that God permits should not check the ever supernatural action of our onward march, we must draw back only before what is sinful, everything else has to be surmounted, overcome because of the excellence of the end, and it must be said, out of duty.

My uncle asks me to express his sympathy in all your tribulations, my mother and sister share his sentiments, they thank you for your kind remembrance. You know, dear friend, what I am for you. Both for this life and the next.

+ Ch. Jos. Eug., Bishop of Icosia.

<sup>31</sup> As in Marseilles, it was the local civil authorities who were warring with Forbin-Janson, but the clergy of Nancy too had no liking for him, *ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>32</sup> These two sees were vacant at that time.

# 181. [To Mr. Persil, keeper of the Seals, in Paris].<sup>33</sup>

*He expresses thanks for the appointment to the See of Marseilles. He accepts it out of obedience to his uncle and counts on the Lord's grace to fulfill this task.*

Marseilles, April 11, 1837.

His Excellency the Keeper of the Seals,

I am in receipt of the letter Your Excellency has done me the honour of writing while forwarding through the good offices of my uncle the royal ordinance that summons me to the See of Marseilles. I thank you for the gracious words you are so kind as to add to the favour the King has deigned to do me, but may I speak frankly? I was on the point of losing courage when I saw at close quarters the burden that was going to be imposed upon me. It required the full force of my uncle's will, no less, which I looked upon as the expression of that of God to bring me to the decision of accepting so heavy an assignment. When it was a matter of a coadjutorship, I saw only from a distance and practically without giving them a thought the difficulties inherent in such a delicate position; today the whole responsibility both before God and man being about to weigh solely on me, I am like one stunned. Even so, I place all my trust in the Lord and hope that helped by his all-powerful grace and the commitment of my will, I will succeed in fulfilling the task imposed on me and in responding in this way to the King's trust.

I have the honour of sending to Your Excellency a letter by which I express to His Majesty the sentiments that animate me. I beg you at the same time to accept the sincerity of those that your personal goodwill inspires me with. ...

<sup>33</sup> Orig.: Paris, Arch. Nat F. 19 2535. In the two paragraphs omitted, at the end of this letter, Bishop de Mazenod asks for a canonry of St. Denis for his uncle, and requests that the canonical informative process should take place in Marseilles, not in Paris.

The various extracts of letters that follow give us a glimpse into Bishop de Mazenod's feelings at the time of his appointment to the See of Marseilles, an appointment that he would not hear of in 1835, cf. letters to Father Tempier, in *Oblate Writings* I, 164-169.

## 182. [To Bishop Garibaldi, internuncio in Paris].<sup>34</sup>

*Bishop de Mazenod accepts being the Bishop of Marseilles out of obedience to his uncle and to do in this way God's will. Request to be excused going to Paris for the canonical informative process because of pastoral visits already arranged.*

Marseilles, April 13, 1837

My Lord,

You have no doubt already learnt that the King by ordinance dated April 1 has named me to the See of Marseilles in place of my uncle whose resignation has been accepted by the Government.

Constrained by the will of His Lordship the present Bishop of Marseilles which I believe to be the expression of God's will, I have accepted the heavy assignment it is desired to lay upon me. I must therefore carry out under your auspices the prescribed formalities for the informative process. For this purpose I would set out for Paris without delay, but unfortunately we are at a time of the year when a journey of this kind would be very difficult. Apart from the fact that I am at present a little unwell and that on that account I would not be leaving for another three weeks or so, my absence during these summer months would cause as well a considerable upheaval in the diocese.

As I did not foresee the present situation, I thought I was free for the duration of the summer season and the parishioners of the various parishes have been advised and are preparing for confirmation and the pastoral visits whose dates have been fixed. It would be all the more troublesome to cancel all that as one would be obliged to postpone considerably what is both indispensable and expected by everyone.

I beseech you therefore to be so kind as to dispense my going to Paris for the information process. If you would be so good as to delegate someone here for that purpose, His Lordship the Bishop of Marseilles, for example, you would be rendering the diocese a service for which I would myself be very grateful; by means of a delegation things would go as if they had

<sup>34</sup> Rough copy: Rome, arch. de la Post. L M-Garibaldi; copy: Marseilles, arch. de l'archevêché, administrative letters of Bishop de Mazenod, vol. 3, p. 152.



taken place before you. I make this request that the process be done here with all the more confidence as I know that at times a like benefit was accorded to various ecclesiastics named to episcopal sees in France. ...

### **183. To Mr. d'Astros, doctor of medicine, Bouches-du-Rhône.**<sup>35</sup>

*Thanks for congratulations. On becoming Bishop of Marseilles, Bishop de Mazenod feels shattered by the "terrible responsibility" he has "always so feared." He trusts in God's goodness, the prayers of the just and the protection of the saints. Bishop Fortuné's glee.*

Marseilles, April 16, 1837

There's no doubt about it, my dear friend, it was to get you to pray for me more zealously that our Father Courtès gave you the news of an event that makes me feel so sad. My lovely Icosia was not weighing on me at all. With the episcopal character I could perform genuine services, even bear a portion of my good neighbours' burden, but I was exempt from every responsibility, I was free and I could count on the rest to which I feel so strong an attraction, when the time came that I hoped was still far distant but which would eventually occur, unless I were the first to die.

Now here I am, doomed to die in harness and this terrible responsibility that I have always so feared, here it is ready to shatter me; for I am far from putting a see on a par with a prefecture. The role, rather the burden of the pastor is frightening in the eyes of faith. And the first pastor, in virtue of his institution, is pastor by divine law for the whole of his diocese! How can one deceive oneself that nothing is suffering through his fault in so vast a field, how can one make a promise always to do what one can to acquit oneself of so immense a duty? For myself, I am bewildered when I reflect on it and have to summon up my inexhaustible trust in God's goodness, in the help of the prayers of the just who still bother themselves about me, in the protection of the saints who have found themselves in the same crisis as myself, to win a little respite.

One day I will tell you just how my good and venerable uncle played this trick on me. He has never been so gleeful as since he pulled this off, he laughs, sings, he is almost tempted to boast about it, I am the only one

<sup>35</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. L M-d'Astros.

put out in this whole affair in which someone has been dealing under the table!

Thank you, dear friend, for all that your good heart inspired you to say so kindly to me on this topic; I would like to merit your praises, but, apart from my goodwill, there is precious little else. When you write your venerable brother, commend me sincerely to his prayers and never forget me in yours, nor Mrs. d'Astros, nor your holy daughters. Goodbye, with my most affectionate greetings.

+ Ch. Jos. Eug., Bishop of Icosia

### **184. To Mrs. de Mazenod, rue Papassaudy, in Aix, Bouches-du-Rhône.**<sup>36</sup>

*Resting in St. Joseph's. He would have liked a quiet life on the death of his uncle, now he will have to sacrifice himself even if he is fed up with the very people for whom he will have to go on doing good, with God's help.*

Marseilles, May 5, 1837.

I agreed, my dear mama, to come and hide myself away in St. Joseph's to breathe in the country air and enjoy a little rest. The weather has not been fine up to now; but it does not matter, I am happy here. I spent the feast of the Cross here and the Ascension.

Today I am writing to give you some of my news. I did have the idea of going to spend a few hours in Aix; but, all things considered, I decided against it, because on the occasion of my appointment it would have been necessary for me to make and receive visits, and I would have tired myself out for nothing. What hurts is that this means I am deprived of the pleasure of seeing you and giving you a hug. I was looking forward to it all the more as I am distressed to see you continually with a cold. These colds are a veritable catarrh; so you must nurse them. I think that your favourite method of staying up a part of the night must contribute to nourishing this annoyance, one that you must avoid allowing to become chronic. On days like today, [p. 2] e.g., when the gusty wind comes whistling up to the very walls

<sup>36</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. FB 1-9. In the omitted paragraph, Bishop de Mazenod speaks of his nephew Louis de Boisgelin.

of the house where I am staying, you should take very good care not to put your nose outside the house, even to go to hear Mass. You would certainly be blown away.

What say you about the trick my uncle has played on me? There I am, nailed down for life. There goes my freedom even for a restricted period that one might have looked forward to. I mean, if my good uncle had preceded me into the other life, I would have gone into retirement to live in peace without a care and with no responsibility. God has disposed otherwise. Now my future will be to do my best in my position, so as to acquit myself worthily of my responsibility before God, the Church and men. Unfortunately I am so fed up with the latter that it will take all my mental resources, and the help of grace, to bring me to go on doing good for them. It will be really an obligation due in justice, once I have become their father! I am at God's disposition, but I may say I really was tricked. I will tell you in confidence that I have written to the Minister and to the King to obtain [p. 3] for my uncle an honourable pension. I have every hope of success. One should not speak of it as yet, for it will only be after the Chambers have voted on the proposition that the Government has made to reestablish the Chapter of St. Denis. I think that my uncle will then be the first nominee. It is a pension, nothing more, with no obligation of changing one's residence. So our dear patriarch will not have to leave his apartments or his settled ways, and with this help we will be able to keep house comfortably, for what we have at present is quite insufficient. ...

+ Ch. Jos. Eug., Bishop of Icosia.

## 185. Retreat preparatory to taking possession of the episcopal see of Marseilles.<sup>37</sup>

*The responsibilities of a residential bishop are more constraining than those of a bishop in partibus. Few among the faithful and priests know what a bishop is. It is difficult to effect change in the habitual practices of parish priests. Prayer asking the Lord for more love and zeal in working for his sanctification and that of his flock. Trust. Resolutions: pious exercises, study; he must above all work out his salvation by means of his flock, save himself with them, pray for them and be animated by love and zeal, with the "fatherly ways worthy of a chief pastor." Reforms to be effected in the clergy.*

St. Joseph, May 1837.<sup>38</sup>

Since the die is cast and in spite of all my efforts up to the present to avoid the burden of the responsibility of a diocese, my calculations and hopes have come to nothing in face of all the various adroit and certainly well-intentioned stratagems of my uncle, I must resign myself to it and make the most I can of my new and in my eyes rather sad position.

I was already a bishop, it is true, but it was as it were only on my own account. I owed nothing to anybody. No one had the right to demand the service of my ministry; all I was in a position to do was inspired in me only by charity. I was free, in a word.

Now it is different! So the episcopate that I have been able up to now to consider as but the fullness of the priesthood with which I had been blessed, and as complementing all the graces the Lord has deigned to grant my soul throughout the whole course of my life, appears to me today as it is in the Church's constitution under its pastoral aspect, namely, as the heaviest burden that could be imposed on a feeble mortal.

I always had a singular fear of this kind of responsibility even in the lower order of the priesthood, that is why on entering into the clerical state, I took up the missionary career, and nothing on earth could have persuaded

<sup>37</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-4.

<sup>38</sup> Tired and ill, Bishop de Mazenod had to go and rest for a fortnight at the beginning of May. He writes in his diary, May 2: "I will be living alone in the little house adjoining the great estate of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart." This property is situated 5 or 6 kilometres from the town on the Aix road.

me to become a parish priest. In consenting to be a bishop, I was consistent as I only wanted to be one *in partibus*, which offered me the double advantage of having no responsibility nor the care of a diocese, and of being able to do a great deal of good in the Church in virtue of the sacred character with which I was invested, and of the functions proper to the episcopate which I would never refuse to exercise.

These fine utopias have vanished. Here I am in fact pastor and chief pastor of a diocese which, whatever one says of it, is not inhabited by saints. It was given me, I would not have chosen it. [p. 2] However, I must attach myself to this people as a father to his children. My existence, my life, all my being must be consecrated to it, I must have no thought but for its good, no fears other than I have not done enough for its welfare and sanctification, no other solicitude than that which must include all its spiritual interests and even in a certain way its temporal welfare. I must in a word consume myself for it, be ready to sacrifice my leisure, my desire, rest, life itself for it.

All that would cost me nothing, I think, if penetrated as I am with a sense of my obligations, I could count on being understood in a century when people do not have the least idea what a Catholic bishop is in the eyes of faith and as instituted by our divine Saviour. It is already a lot if there is a tiny group of priests with some right thoughts on this fundamental article of our holy religion. That being so, what can one expect of the simple faithful? What cooperation among the clergy? What shared sentiments among the flock? The most devout of Christians are used to not going higher than their confessors and parish priests, who, up to now, have been little inclined to teach them that the Church, founded on the Apostles, is governed only by the Bishops their successors; that they alone were established by Jesus Christ to feed their souls of which they are the true and properly-speaking the only pastors; that from these pastors there are poured out on the whole flock the blessings and graces that sanctify it since in them resides the jurisdiction to unloose or bind consciences; also towards them should go up both respect and affection as is the duty of children towards their father.

Today a bishop is relegated to the inner sanctum of his office, to give out dispensations or attend to his correspondence. And if he makes an appearance on occasion [p. 3] in a parish it is to administer confirmation that can only be received from him. But for that there would be no seeing him and, for all the attention paid to this disorder, you would see a whole episcopate go by without it entering into a single parish priest's head to

render an account of his management to the one who sent him as his representative amid a portion of his flock. And God knows how these men who are so independent of the authority from which their own emanates and who are what they are solely through that, God knows how they acquit themselves of their duties, the value they attach to these souls who are confided to them by their chief pastor and whose affections, trust and respect they take care to attach to themselves alone. They have them served by curates; not the least concern to bring back those who stray, little or no zeal to affirm those who are making progress, no effort to have them advance in perfection. All remains unchanged. Everything is done by routine, the important thing is to change nothing, that is one must do as little and as ill as those who came before; ordinary humdrum suffices. But surely that is a mercenary way to work, can the chief pastor tolerate such abuses? Certainly not! but if he wants to do something about it, ignorance cries "encroachment." Since his titles and the heavy responsibility that weighs on him are held in ignorance, exception will be taken if he wishes to get involved in the affairs of his family, who really are his, for whom he must render an account to God, and whom he is therefore bound to watch over and direct himself if necessary.

Dear God, when one looks at things with the eyes of faith and with a strong conviction about one's duties, when one sees the difficulties which conspire against their fulfillment, there is every reason to be discouraged and deterred. However, one must proceed, it is what must needs be that God is imposing on me, let us be brave and count on his grace. [p. 4] 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 would succumb irretrievably to the burden it would be impossible for me to bear with the ordinary graces of a common virtue. Now or never is the time for me to carry myself back to the times when I was so fruitful in good thoughts; generous sentiments, to go back to my consecration, my priestly ordination. Then there were holy inspirations, even some lights to understand them, a certain fidelity to correspond to them, but how short it was! Instability! Temptation! Dissipation! Weakness! Affairs, contradictions, disgust, a certain contempt of the human race have almost destroyed the zeal I burned with once upon a time. 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 correspond with it and obtain the rest.

How is one to proceed if one is to hope to arrive at this? Above all I must profoundly humiliate myself before God at finding myself so different from what I was once by his grace. Stand in confusion at having to renew myself and rebuild the edifice from the foundations, while I should be at the pinnacle, the apogee of my perfection, now that it is a question for me of answering the Master's call, *Ecce adsum*, one ought to be able to say: [p. 5] *Ecce adsum, ecce ego mitte me*. But if my strength is diminished, if the salt has lost its savour, if the lamp no longer gives light, how may I answer with confidence the Master's call? Lord, come to my aid; come yourself to help me: *Deus in adiutorium meum intende, Domine ad adjuvandum me festina*. To you alone it belongs to give strength to my soul; you alone can renew in my depths the sacred fire of your love which must first enkindle fire in my heart, and then pour itself out by my ministry in the souls whom you want to confide in me: *Spiritus rectum innova in visceribus meis*. I think I understand the extent of the duties of the charge imposed on me, and it is that which throws me into a state of consternation because I perceive myself as one deprived of virtues, while I ought to be rich in them to acquit myself with decency of my great ministry. It is not courage precisely that is lacking me. I count all too much for that on God's help, but it is the sight of my wretchedness and poverty which became apparent to me when I sought to probe myself and descend into my interior, which makes me fear remaining quite below the level of my obligations, failing to respond to the plans of God and the Church's expectation. It reminds me that once I felt in my soul such vigour that on reading the life of St. Charles, it seemed to me not to be above my desire to do as much as he did in his position. I am less temerarious today now that I have had experience of my weakness and of the little help I can expect from others, when I have to set my hand to the task. But still I would like to be a good bishop. I would like from the start of my episcopate to acquit myself worthily of all my duties. I would like in a word, in working efficaciously for the sanctification of my flock, to sanctify myself to an eminent degree of perfection as the sublimity of my [episcopal] character and my eminent dignity require. [p. 6] *Attende tibi*, St. Paul tells me. *Exemplum esto fidelium in verbo, in conversatione, in charitate, in fide, in castitate*. That is to say, be adorned with every virtue, *attende lectioni exhortationi et doctrinae*, progress in all the sciences which have a bearing on salvation: *Noli negligere gratiam quae in te est, quae data est tibi per prophetiam, cum impositione manuum presbyterii. Haec meditare, in his esto: ut profectus*

*tuus manifestus sit omnibus. Attende tibi et doctrinae*, it cannot be repeated too often, *insta in illis. Hoc enim faciens et TEIPSUM SALVUM FACIES ET EOS QUI TE AUDIUNT* (Tim. 4:12ff).

Here we have the whole secret of this great affair.

To maintain, try not to lose the grace which has been granted and communicated by the imposition of hands. To deepen, meditate, renew oneself and remain firm, watch over oneself; bring forth exteriorly the example of every virtue, there lies the only way of saving oneself and saving others when one is bishop.

I give you thanks, O Lord, for having made shine forth this light from the sacred deposit of your Holy Scriptures. As you show me the way I should follow, and give me the desire to follow it, you will also give me the powerful help of your grace so I may tread it with a firm step, and with perseverance. I expect no less of your usual goodness, that mercy that my infidelities have never wearied and which inspires me even in this moment with so much trust. I shall without delay put out my hand to the work, for time is pressing. From the first day I can be canonically instituted, that is to say, placed by Jesus Christ to watch over the fold, charged to instruct it, feed it, edify it *in verbo, in conversatione, in charitate, in fide, in castitate*, as I have just seen, to become pastor and father, invested with the very authority of Jesus Christ whom I must represent in the midst [p. 7] of that portion of his flock that will become thus my own flock for which I shall have to render an account to the Sovereign Pastor of our souls who will have given them to me to save them in sacrificing myself for them.

The episcopate is the apogee of perfection on earth. They should be saints like the Apostles whose successors Bishops are to exercise worthily their functions, to accomplish as one ought all the obligations.

So it means descending into one's interior to purify it of every imperfection and remove all that could constitute an obstacle to the working of the Holy Spirit. It is that divine Spirit which must henceforth be absolute master of my soul, the only mover of my thoughts, desires, affections, my whole entire will. I must be attentive to all its inspirations, listen to them first in the silence of prayer, follow them then and obey them in the line of action they lay down. Avoid with care all that could sadden it and weaken the influence of its power in me. Purify myself each day by renewed penitence for my faults and lively and sincere regrets for all the infidelities of my life, frequently reinvigorate these sentiments by the sacrament of penance by going to confession at least twice a week.



Nourish the love of God and all the virtues that flow from it by the daily offering of the holy Sacrifice, oraison, prayer, reading holy Scripture, the holy Fathers, good ascetical works, the lives of the saints.

Accompany this study with that of the holy Canons of the general and particular Councils, theology and church history and other useful reading, avoiding all that could dissipate the mind and uselessly amuse the imagination. Have ever [p. 8] before the eyes the example of holy bishops to follow in their footsteps in everything that can be imitated.

This is what comes to my mind at this moment.

Assiduous meditation of God's law and profound reflection on the great obligations of the episcopate will bring me no doubt to perceive some gaps in the resumé I have just done. It is my disposition to adopt everything that may be of help to me in reaching the perfection of my most holy estate.

As my obligations cannot be limited to the acquisition of the sublimest virtues, I must attentively consider what is imposed in relation to the flock the Sovereign Pastor is to confide to me. I must achieve my salvation through them, I must save myself with them, at least I must be able to bear witness to having done everything that depended on me for their instruction, to exhort them, turn them away from evil, excite them to the practice of virtue, be an example to them in all kinds of good works, finally to procure for them all the means in my power to assure their salvation and lead them thus from the terrestrial fold, where God places them under my crook, to heaven where we must be reunited in God's bosom.

This is where one will meet the greatest difficulties for if the holy bishops our predecessors always found it very difficult to achieve any good in their dioceses as their biographies bear witness, what price today when there is scarcely any faith left amongst Christians, when the insubordination, which renders civil government almost impossible, has penetrated as far as the Church, when peoples unsettled by all the errors with which they are deluded [p. 9] on sovereignty, have no longer any idea of the divine constitution of the Church and its immutable hierarchy, when the very priests are more or less imbued with these doctrines, and tolerate with such difficulty what they call the yoke of bishops and with whose decrees they have such difficulty in complying. Thus dioceses are composed of a multitude of Christians who are so only in name, and who want to stay strangers to the family to which they do not suspect they belong by spiritual ties which, although very real, are totally unknown to them. These latter completely fail to recognize their father because they have turned away from

God. Their bishop is for them a man clothed in purple, exercising an authority they call ecclesiastical authority, i.e., which has authority over priests. If they meet him, they see him pass with a stupid indifference. Their apathetic souls feel no emotion at the sight of someone who represents God himself to them, who has received from Jesus Christ an absolute power over their souls, from whom may issue forth over them the most abundant blessings, who is specially charged with freeing them from the servitude of the devil, with showing them the way of salvation, leading them surely on it in defending them from the attacks of all their enemies. They meet him and without suspecting that they owe to this pastor, this father the profoundest respect and a filial affection, they do not give him even the smallest sign of reverence. It is a stranger who is passing by. What can be done for this considerable portion of the flock? Pray for it and catch its attention by an irreproachable conduct, but that is not enough for men of this stamp, one would have to be able to attract them by striking virtues that one has rarely the occasion to practice. Once again I see nothing but assiduous prayer to attract on them extraordinary graces that they too little merit for one to deceive oneself that one can obtain these graces for them.

[p. 10] The rest of the flock is made up of two other sorts of Christians. The one sort having kept the faith, but not practicing the precepts of their religion. The others, faithful up to a certain point, but of whom only a tiny number is well-instructed in its duties with regard to the chief and properly-speaking only pastor of their souls. The great majority of this latter category has the disposition of which I spoke at the beginning of these notes as a result of its ignorance and the slackness of those who should have instructed them better; the others render an account of nothing, they do not scoff but they remain indifferent. One can, I think, bring back both sorts through instruction, win their allegiance through good example, regularity of a truly episcopal life-style, zeal, charity, by fatherly ways worthy of a chief pastor who has a sense of his duties considered in the spiritual order, i.e., who sees things with the eyes of faith and looks on his diocessans as children whom God has given him, whose true spiritual father he is, whom he must love with the most constant and tender love, for whom he must endure anything, even their very ingratitude.

Series of instructions in the various parishes, catechism, visits to the sick in turn in all sectors of the city will be effective ways to bring about good among them, at the same time giving me the benefit of satisfying the duties of my position as I like to consider them.

Lastly what completes my flock will be the clergy. Will I be well provided for under this aspect? Will I find in them that unalloyed cooperation I have the right to expect? Will they be docile to my suggestions, enter into my views? Will they be my consolation, my crown? [p. 11] To judge by the past, I must expect not precisely a crude resistance which would still be impossible in the currently established order in the Church of France, but difficulties arising from the habit of independence in which they are established. This will give rise to complaints, repugnance, unspoken oppositions which will hamper my path at every step.

However there are indeed reforms to be achieved and certainly I would be doing a bad job if I allowed myself to be intimidated by considerations of a purely human kind. That would be purchasing peace and quiet too dearly, to procure it at the price of culpable concessions. I will have to do battle with egoism, vested interests, lack of zeal, routine, the inaction of leaders, i.e., the parish priests, and insubordination towards them on the part of their curates. I will have to instill some firmness into the Chapter, remind its members of their duty as canons which they carry out so badly. In conscience I will not be able to postpone making the pastoral visitation of all the city parishes and reforming a thousand abuses and a host of old customs. All that will not be achieved without contradictions, but they will never reach the proportions that D. Barthememy de Martyrs experienced when he wanted to make the pastoral visit of his episcopal city of Brague. We are less virtuous than he, but we are impelled by the same duties, and with God's grace we will be able to fulfill them and acquit ourselves of them as we ought.

It is not that I would want to overturn everything right at the beginning, no; firmness must always be tempered by gentleness, it is all one could ask for. But it must be understood that it is the business of the bishop to govern, and that he is obliged to give encouragement to the good as to curb all that is bad and disordered. If this principle is not acknowledged, anarchy will immediately follow to the great detriment of souls.

The whole thing is to act only with a view to pleasing God and to acquit oneself worthily of the charge he has imposed on me. I know that even then one is not exempt from troubles, for St. Gregory Nazianzen used to say already in his time that he drew down on himself great evils and persecutions *because [p. 12] in everything he had considered God alone*, and St. Bernard wrote that purity of intention in a pastor consists in seeking only God's glory and the salvation of his people although what is true and just may have the approval of very few persons, while on the contrary what the greatest number approves of is often false and bad.

So it is futile to hope for general approval or to wait on it before bringing about some reform. *Super actionibus quae manifestae pertinent ad evangelicum episcopum, non oportet consulere quemquam*, and if anyone counsels you differently you may be sure he has lost his mind: *insanire puta, si quid aliud consuluerit*. And St. Thomas rightly says that if one pays attention to what people say one will never do any good, *qui observat ventum non seminat, et qui considerat nubes nunquam metet*, it is written in Ecclesiastes 11:4.

**186. [Daily schedule].**<sup>39</sup>

[May 1837]<sup>40</sup>

Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. (Matt. 6:34).

|                                    |        |         |
|------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Rise.....                          | 5      |         |
| Oraison in chapel .....            | 5 1/2  |         |
| Mass .....                         | 6      |         |
| Thanksgiving and little hours..... | 6 1/2  |         |
| Office for study .....             | 7      |         |
| Holy Scripture                     | 1 hr.  |         |
| The holy Fathers                   | 1 hr.  |         |
| Theology                           | 1 hr.  |         |
| Lunch .....                        | 10     | o'clock |
| Audiences.....                     | 10 1/2 | o'clock |
| Office.....                        | 1      | o'clock |
| to say vespers                     |        |         |
| compose                            |        |         |
| write                              |        |         |
| correspondence                     |        |         |
| edifying reading                   |        |         |
| instructive reading                |        |         |
| light reading                      |        |         |
| business                           |        |         |

<sup>39</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-3.

<sup>40</sup> An undated page, but written on the back of a letter in which one may read: "Bishop E. de Mazenod, bishop-elect of Marseilles." This schedule was doubtless written during the retreat of May 1837 or in the course of the same year.

|                                     |       |         |
|-------------------------------------|-------|---------|
| Visit to the Blessed Sacrament..... | 4     | o'clock |
| Outing and visits in Town .....     | 4 1/2 |         |

courtesy calls on convents  
especially the sick and the poor  
each parish in turn

|                       |    |         |
|-----------------------|----|---------|
| Dinner.....           | 6  | o'clock |
| Salon.....            | 7  | o'clock |
| Prayer in chapel..... | 9  | o'clock |
| Matins and Lauds      |    |         |
| Bed .....             | 10 | o'clock |

- 1 day for the semins.: superiors and bursars according to need.
- 1 day for the convents: chaplains and superiors or directors.
- 1 day for city parishes.
- 1 day for the country parishes.

Each domestic will carry out all he is told to do but in particular: Pascal, everything that concerns my personal service.

## 187. To Mrs. de Mazenod, rue Papassaudy, in Aix, Bouches-du-Rhône.<sup>41</sup>

*Bishop de Mazenod encourages his mother to accept God's will for Louis de Boisgelin who wants to enter the Jesuits*

At N.D. du Laus, July 20, 1837.

I am going this evening to spend the night in Gap, my dear mother, to leave from there tomorrow morning. I am heading for St. Martin. In Peyrolles I hope to find Armand's<sup>42</sup> coach to bring me to my sister's side, where I plan to stay eight or ten days.

You will have understood now Cailhol's reserve designed not to subject you to sending 500ff off to Vienna with absolutely no need. The 500ff you have already had sent to Louis should suffice for him to make his journey. I know nothing more of that child since the last letter I received from him in Billens. He had written me an earlier one, which he thought the

<sup>41</sup> Orig.: Aix, hotel de Boisgelin MJ I-1.

<sup>42</sup> Armand de Boisgelin, husband of Eugenie de Mazenod.

whole family had read, which was what he wanted. My uncle's excessive reserve meant that the young fellow's intentions were not disclosed to you straight away. The fact is that he definitely wants to become a Jesuit. He was only waiting for my permission to set out. I [p. 2] did not think I should take it on myself to give it to him. Not having been consulted on his vocation, it was not for me to take any responsibility, even if he did tell me that his father would approve whatever I did. I am far from opposing what God asks of him, but I cannot act without knowledge of the case. I believe however it would be useless to try to keep him where he no longer wishes to be. It would be foolish for us to bring ruin on ourselves to go against our child, who would end up going off anyway, after going through a lot more of our money. We have done what we thought was due for his happiness,<sup>43</sup> it remains only for us to conform ourselves to God's will, once we know what it is. The world is not so much of a thing to lose; God is doing us a favour when he takes us out of it. The more the way in which he wishes to lead us leads on to perfection, the greater is the favour of the [p. 3] Master of hearts who traces it for us. So, my dear Mother, act the Christian in this situation as ever; and if nature suffers, may supernatural thoughts strengthen and encourage you to offer with a good heart to the Lord the sacrifice he is asking of you as of us. God in his goodness will keep for you still the consolation of hearing him preach and hearing his mass. The succession of priests must go on in our family. I believe there was already a relative with my great-uncle, then his nephew the bishop of Marseilles, then me: there you have at least three generations, not to mention the doctrinaire, who was an isolated case. There really had to be one in the fourth generation. I hope that if Eugene<sup>44</sup> gets married one day one of his children will follow in our footsteps, and so on till the end of time. There's nothing to get upset about. Goodbye, dear mother. Looking at the bright side, priests are of infinitely more use to their families, both when their parents are still alive and after their death, than are lay people. Let us bless God for everything. Goodbye. Affectionate greetings.

+ Eug., bishop.

<sup>43</sup> Louis had followed some of his studies with the Jesuits in Fribourg. In January 1837, negotiations were undertaken without success with the family of the Marquis d'Oppède with a view to a marriage. Louis turned towards a diplomatic career. In March he went to Paris with his father and found employment in Vienna in Austria, and was there already in May. But from June he was writing to Bishop de Mazenod to ask his permission to enter the Jesuit novitiate in Avignon.

<sup>44</sup> Eugene de Boisgelin, the younger brother of Louis.

**188. To Mrs. de Mazenod, rue Papassaudy, n. 2; Aix.**<sup>45</sup>

*Bishop de Mazenod encourages his mother to accept the decision of Louis de Boisgelin to enter the Jesuits. One cannot oppose God's call.*

St. Martin, July 26, 1837

Nothing more natural, my dear mother, than the feelings Louis' decision had brought on you. I understand your chagrin, and up to a point I share it; but pardon me for saying they are excessive in your case. After first allowing nature its say, one must learn to calm oneself and see things ultimately with the eyes of faith, in a supernatural way. All things considered is it then a misfortune for us that Louis consecrate himself to the religious life? There is no doubt that that state is more perfect than the state of marriage and that it is a grace of predilection to be called to it. You would prefer him to have decided to give preference to the simple clerical state. But it is not for you or us to decide things like that. To God alone belongs the right to call each one where he will and as he wills. Louis is a wise and reflective person; he is not taking this step without having pondered it in his heart. Who knows! perhaps he is reproaching himself for having resisted the attraction of grace, and does not want to put off any longer [p. 2] obedience to the voice of the Master who is calling him. You think he has been solicited to make the choice he has. Frankly you are mistaken. Louis assures me positively in his letters that *never at any time* has anyone spoken to him about entering the Society he has chosen. At the present time in Vienna, where he is, there are none of these religious. So it is quite of his own accord, I have it from himself, that he has made up his mind. How can we object to that? All we can do is require him to come back and set out for us his reasons, but no one has the right to oppose a vocation once it is seen to be genuine. That would be a serious sin and one which I for my part am far from willing to commit. What must surprise you and quite astonishes myself are the reactions of his father in this [p. 3] affair. He has certainly been more crossed than anyone by a decision for which he was so little prepared. In actual fact he has not uttered a murmur of complaint, and he has written to his son like a real Christian father. My letter certainly was that of a bishop, of an uncle who has no wish to prevaricate; but as well I put in a few quite severe, though just, observations, to reproach him for not

<sup>45</sup> Orig.: Aix, hotel de Boisgelin MJ I-1.

having had enough trust in me to give me his confidence, and with having me commit myself to some steps that compromise me, etc. My brother-in-law said nothing like this. I have no words for my sister. Clearly she is upset, but her resignation is equal to her virtue. So all this should be an encouragement to you, my darling mother, not to upset yourself as you are doing. Your health must suffer as a result, and that would be sheer futility, as God in his goodness would take no notice and inexorably his will will be done. Let us wait patiently for the explanations Louis gives us, and submit ourselves in advance to a sacrifice that will have its compensations even in this world. Goodbye, darling mother. Do not come to Marseilles before the second week of August. Tender and affectionate greetings.

## 189. Daily spiritual exercises.<sup>46</sup>

*Daily schedule: spiritual exercises, study, correspondence and study, visits.*

[After 1837]<sup>47</sup>

Morning prayer, oraison, mass, thanksgiving, little hours, Holy Scripture, spiritual reading, Vespers, Compline, rosary, adoration, Matins and Lauds, evening prayers, examen. I calculate 4 and a half to five hours.

Quite frequently as well, nearly every day, administration of the sacrament of *confirmation*, which can take on average another hour, so now we have nearly six hours for spiritual exercises.

What is left for study when one is the whole day long at the mercy of all-comers? Even so time has to be found for correspondence; two or three hours on Tuesday of each week have to be consecrated to the diocesan Council, Sundays are spent almost wholly in the church.

It is not easy to define the times best suited to each task. If I could get to bed at ten o'clock, I would get up at five, but it is usually nearer midnight than eleven when I get to bed. So let us fix on five-thirty. Let us be in the chapel a quarter of an hour later for oraison, to say mass, make thanksgiving and recite the little hours. It will always be close on eight o'clock when I leave the chapel.

<sup>46</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-3.

<sup>47</sup> An undated page. It seems to be written after 1837. In 1837 Bishop de Mazenod proposed 5 o'clock as his hour for rising, and 10 o'clock for bed. Here he puts rising at 5:30 as he does not get to bed before 11:00 o'clock.



As I am always made to waste time waiting for my dreary breakfast, I will go up to my room instead of going to the dining-room, and I will wait for someone to bring me up my coffee while occupying myself with the reading of the Holy Scripture.

If I could count on no one pushing past my door until ten, I would dispatch a lot of business, write a lot of letters, but experience has taught me that every day one comes up against people in a big hurry and who will not be reasoned with. Even so means must be found to keep them out until that time. From then until dinner no more rest.

After dinner some moments with the family, then one must escape from the house to work elsewhere. Otherwise the visits start up again and do not finish until evening.

**190. Note written on the Register of the Association of the Blessed Sacrament established in the monastery of the Sacramentines of Marseilles.<sup>48</sup>**

*Devotion to the Eucharist*

Marseilles, July 25, 1847

I would love to spend my life at the foot of the holy tabernacles where our adorable Saviour dwells. It is to go some way towards realizing this desire of my heart that I associate myself with the adoration of all these fervent souls who succeed one another night and day before the throne of the love and mercy of Jesus Christ, our God, our all. As well as the days I already consecrate to this duty of adoration in the various parishes of my episcopal city, the Sunday, Monday and Tuesday of Lent and Thursday of Sexagint, and the time fixed in my rule for my daily adoration, I choose, in union with the Association of the Blessed Sacrament, the day of the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, from eight to nine o'clock in the morning.

+ J.C. Eugene, Bishop of Marseilles

<sup>48</sup> Copy: Ms. Yenveux IV, 119.

## 191. Extract from his will.<sup>49</sup>

*Thanksgiving. He invokes the intercession of the saints and asks for prayers.*

Marseilles, August 1, 1854,  
72nd birthday.

I the undersigned Charles Joseph Eugene de Mazenod, Bishop of Marseilles, see fit to make my will in my own hand as follows. My first thought, when thinking on death, which must fill my thoughts as I pen these lines of my last will, is to lose myself in thanksgiving before God for having called me to the knowledge of the truth in the bosom of the holy, apostolic, Roman Catholic Church, in which I have the happiness to be living and in which I wish to die.

I implore God's mercy, by the merits of our divine Saviour Jesus Christ in whom I place all my trust, to obtain pardon for my sins and the grace of my soul being received in holy paradise.

With this in mind I invoke the intercession of the most holy and immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God, daring to remind her in all humility, but with the consolation too, of the filial devotion of my whole life and the desire I have always had to make her known and loved and to spread her cult in every place by the ministry of those the Church has given me as children and who are united with me in my desires.

I also invoke the intercession of all the holy Angels and in particular my holy Guardian Angel, who has preserved me during my life from so many dangers to soul and body.

Again, I invoke all the Saints in paradise, men and women, and especially the Holy Patrons given me at baptism, St. Charles, St. Joseph, and St. Eugene. I trust that at the hour of my death St. Joseph, my favourite Patron and the Patron given by the Church to those at the point of death, will deign to help me in that moment of extreme need. I take comfort in the memory of having honoured him with a profound sense of his greatness and all the prerogatives that raise him above every creature after the most

<sup>49</sup> Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM XVI-1. We have a first will dated July 7, 1845 (2 pages) and a codicil made January 20, 1861 (10 pages). Only the present document, dated August 1, 1854 (57 pages) includes spiritual considerations which we publish here.

holy Virgin, his true wife. I am happy to be leaving behind me some indications of my just devotion to this great Saint in the Proper I obtained from the Holy See for my diocese, which will perpetuate his cult in a special way among my dear diocesans.

Could I forget to recommend myself to the holy souls in purgatory, I who during my whole episcopate have never neglected to procure for them the relief they have the right to expect from the charity of their brothers who make up the Church militant on earth. Clearly they can no longer win merit in their present state, which is why the Church comes constantly to their aid. But I hold it as certain that dear as they are to God they can obtain much from our common Father in favour of those for whom they pray. So it is with full confidence that I invoke them, not fearing to remind them of the titles that all I have ceaselessly done for them gives me to their remembrance.

Now I turn my thoughts to those who will survive me and it is in virtue of all the bonds that unite us that I claim the aid of their charity for the relief of my soul. I have indeed complete trust that God in his goodness, in virtue of his infinite mercy, will grant me his holy paradise. Ah yes! that hope which is obligatory on us all is as lively in my heart as faith, and would I could say as charity. But it is precisely the knowledge of the imperfection of this charity in me and the countless infidelities I have to reproach myself with and which have made it grow cold in my soul, despite the graces with which I have been blessed all my life, that make me fear the length and severity of my purgatory. Acknowledging that I deserved hell, I cannot but acquiesce unreservedly in the sentence of temporal suffering that God's justice, tempered by his mercy, will pronounce for me, should I be condemned to purify myself and expiate my faults until the end of the world in that place of suffering. It is this persuasion that, to shorten the desirable term, has me cry out to the friends I leave behind me, to borrow the words of the Church's prayers: *miseremini mei saltem vos amici mei*.

It is on this ground that I address myself first to you, my beloved co-operators, priests of my diocese. As God is my witness I have always loved you with a fatherly love. Those among you who know me the best know the extent this feeling governs my soul. It is to the extent of so identifying myself with you that your sorrows are mine, I rejoice at your joys and I take on myself in a way your virtues and exult before God and men for having received as my lot, as my spiritual children priests such as you. I say it in all truth for your consolation, my dear sons in Jesus Christ, in the course of my lengthy episcopate, I have never had cause to do other than congrat-

ulate myself on the goodwill and behaviour of my clergy. The exceptions are so rare and few in number that I mention them only to confirm my assertion in the honourable and touching witness I bear to practically every one of the others.

I hope that the rest of the flock God has given me to govern will imitate the example of my priests and that all my lambs will make it a duty to pray God for my soul. I have tried to be a good shepherd for them, both by the prayers I have never ceased to address to God for their sanctification and especially by the holy Sacrifice of the mass offered daily for this intention, and by utilizing on their behalf all the services of my great ministry, and finally by having myself represented among them by good co-operators.

I have no need to remind my dear daughters, the religious of the various Orders who edify my diocese with their virtues and devotion what they have all promised me. So I count too on their powerful suffrages as on those of the religious family of which I am more especially the father, and which a just reserve restrains me from praising here.

Before moving on to the dispositions I must make in this testament, I wish to insist strongly that I forgive with all my heart all those who, in the course of my life, have done themselves the wrong of making themselves my enemies, have calumniated or offended against me. I have never been able to understand how it could come about that there should be people in the world who wish me ill. I could sometimes have caused someone pain in the exercise of the demanding duties of my holy ministry; but I affirm that I have never wished ill to anyone at all nor have I ever had the intention willfully to harm anyone at all. I disclaim not simply the feeling of hatred, but rancour too has also been inimical to my nature and I have often been heard to say in all truth that there is no merit for me in forgiveness. Even so I ask pardon from all those who believe they have a bone to pick with me, those I may have offended or merely saddened, protesting again that it is really in spite of myself and without having intended it that I have given them displeasure. If a guarantee were needed of my habitual dispositions with regard to all those I have just listed in this latter paragraph, and I flatter myself that they must be but few, I copy out here the prayer I make each day on descending from the altar after offering the Holy Sacrifice and in the presence of the living God I have just had the happiness to receive: *Ignosco et dimitto ex toto corde omnibus inimicis meis, omnibus me calumniantibus, omnibus mihi detrahentibus, omnibus quocumque modo mihi nocentibus, vel volentibus mala;* and this one too, after praying for the

Church, sinners, heretics and schismatics, non-believers, those in tribulation or oppressed by misfortune, my neighbours and friends, those who ask for my prayers and the souls in purgatory, I add these very words: *miserere omnium adversantium mihi, vel qui me aliqua molestia me affecerunt*. That is how a Christian, how a bishop exacts revenge. ...

I would not like to end this solemn act of my last will without expressing to my vicars general, my secretary general and the other priests who have constantly surrounded me with their affectionate concern, the tender sense of attachment, esteem and gratitude I hold in their regard until my last breath. They have faithfully helped me in my long administration, sustained and encouraged me in the sorrows inseparable from my ministry. They have been real friends to me, able to appreciate my heart which loves them so much. In a word they have made smooth my existence with their tender affection and filial devotion. May God give them all the happiness they procured for me. Although I count on them remembering me before the Lord, independently of every external token that reminds them of me, I beseech those I designate by name as my heirs to choose among my things the most precious, the chasuble or cope that suits them, and one of the engravings decorating my apartments.

It would be my wish that the poor form part of the cortege that is customarily summoned for the burial of bishops. They will be represented by two of their number chosen by the parish priest in each parish of my episcopal city. These thirty two poor people will be dressed out at the expense of my heirs. The dress given them will consist in jacket, waistcoat, trousers, a pair of socks, a pair of shoes and hat. Whatever time of year it is I die, these garments must be good for the winter.

While I do not doubt the charity of my heirs, who will certainly not overlook anything to procure the relief of my soul after my death, even so I see fit to lay down that over and above all the aid their hearts will inspire them to grant me, they will have three thousand masses said for the repose of my soul. A thousand of these masses will be said by the priests of my diocese, and two thousand by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, distributed in the various countries of the world.

I would have been really happy if after my death my heart were placed in the sanctuary of Notre Dame de la Garde at the feet of our good Mother whose temple I have had the happiness of rebuilding, but just objections, inspired by the filial love of those I have so loved on earth, are opposed to this resolution.

My corpse will be disposed of as seen fit. I surrender it to the earth that it may undergo the condemnation pronounced against sin. Even so, I firmly hope that after this deserved dissolution, it will rise again to glory, and reunited once more with my soul, they will sing for all Eternity the praises of God's mercy: *misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo* [...]

## 192. Address given at the closure of the diocesan synod.<sup>50</sup>

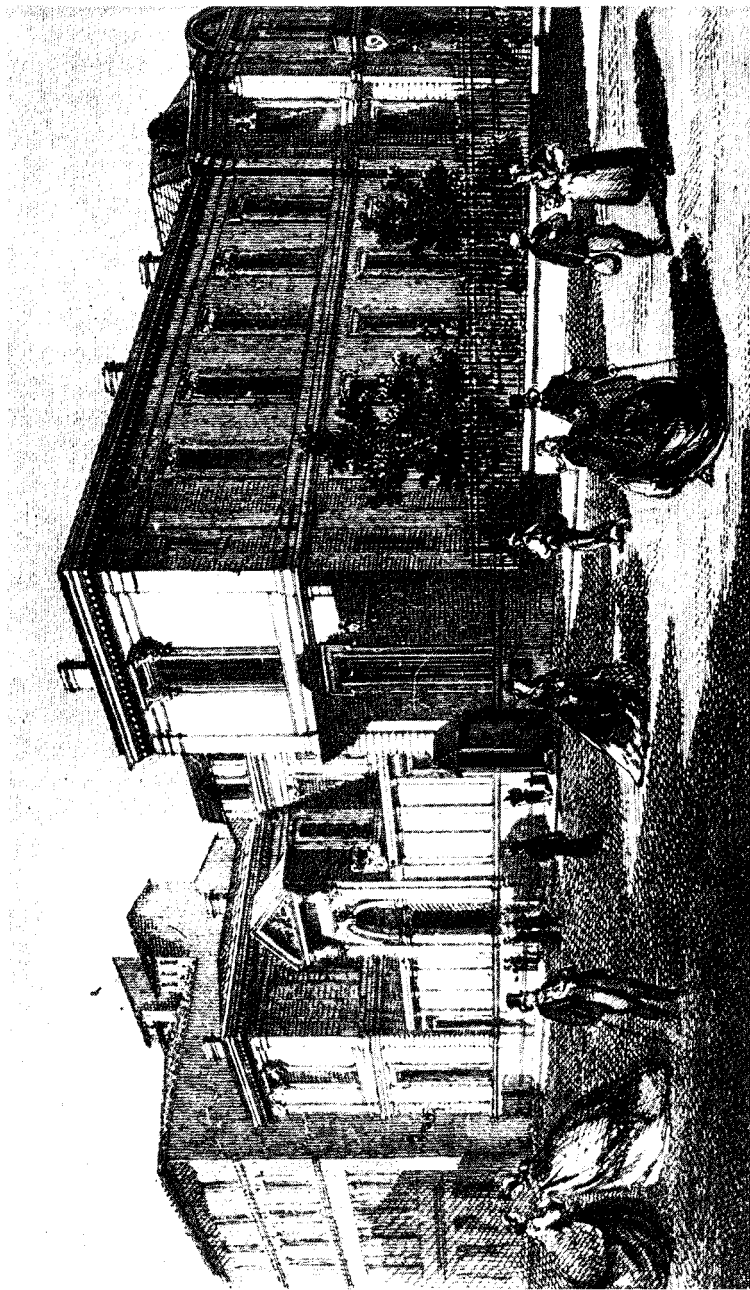
*His joy at sharing the life of his priests during the three days of the synod; consolation on seeing their loyalty and goodwill.*

October 1, 1856

Our dearest sons, he said in a voice full of emotion and tears, I am your father; this I am by my age; this I am because of my episcopal character; this I am in virtue of my heart; for many of you I am this on yet another title, because I imposed hands on you; and even so I confess my powerlessness to tell you what is taking place today in my soul; on my word, I can find no way to express my feelings. No doubt, I have known you already for a long time. Certainly on clergy retreat days I spent time with you; I followed all your exercises; I admired your regularity, punctiliousness and piety; but those were days of recollection; there was thus less scope for opening up our hearts, and too I was unable to be with you as often as I would have wanted, to share your recreations, to live with you that intimate life that would have spelt happiness for me; your souls' concerns usually deprived me of it. But these recent days, during these days of blessings and graces, I have got to know you better; I was with you nearly all the time; I have witnessed that fraternal unity, mutual respect, trust in your Bishop that distinguishes you; I have been privy to your innermost thoughts; I have made note of your every least observation, and I will take them seriously into consideration, as they greatly merit to be appreciated; in a word, by following you all most closely, I have felt that I love you all

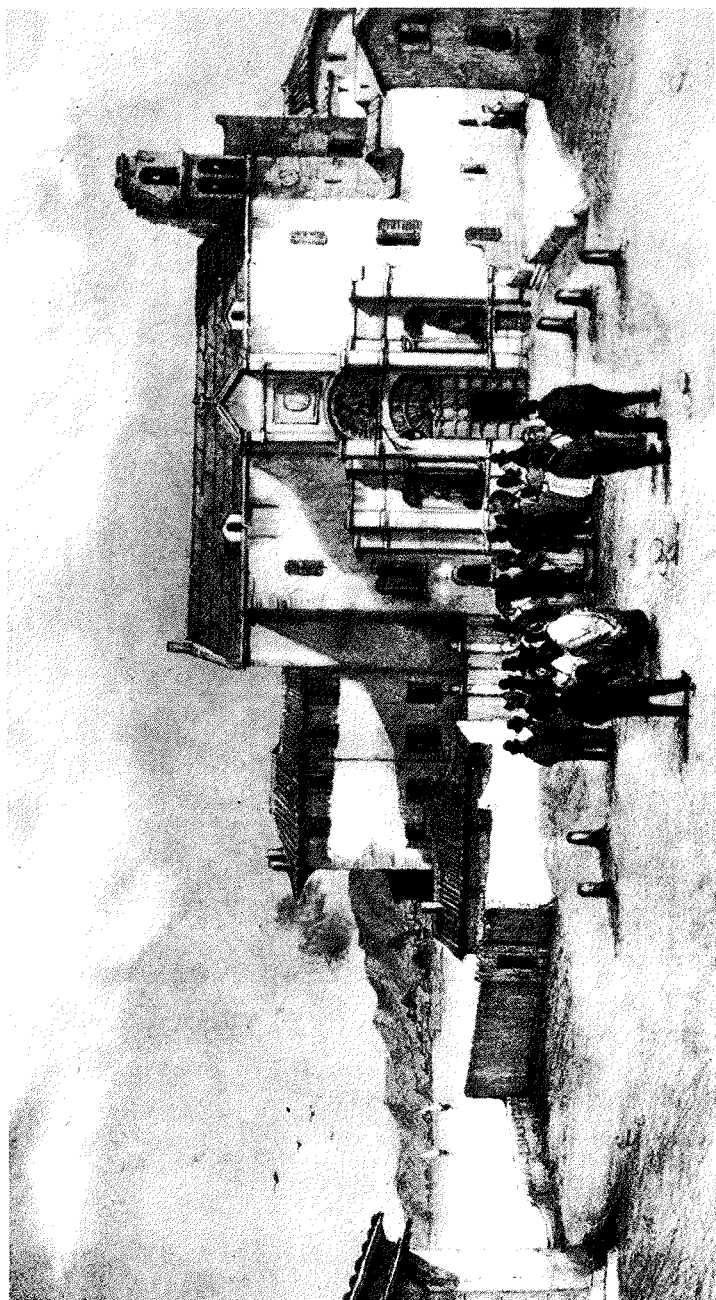
<sup>50</sup> Extract from the *Ordonnances synodales du diocèse de Marseille*, Marseilles, 1857, pp. 376-378. The editor of the work writes: "We will not attempt to put into words the lively emotion felt by our venerable Bishop" in response to the words of Father Payan, addressed him in the name of his confrères; "for the space of three days his soul overflowed with consolations and joy; the final day capped it all; he had to give vent to feelings in his heart in new blessings, feelings till then scarcely kept pent up. He did it in a touching improvisation, whose substance we will try to reproduce, which moved all present to tears and whose touching effect will never be effaced from the hearts of those privileged to hear it."

more. My sons! my dear cooperators, may God, who has presided so visibly over our meetings, repay you a hundredfold the ineffable consolations you have given me, the happy days with which you see fit to crown my last years. *There was just one thing that could disturb me:* it is the profound feeling that perturbed my soul when every morning I ascended the altar of the Lord to offer there the Holy Mysteries, while you yourselves were deprived of this grace. I thought then how unworthy of it I was, and I emptied myself before God every time you came so humbly to receive holy communion from my hands. ... Now you are going to go forth from this cenacle to resume with fresh ardour the manifold functions of your holy ministry; you will have, it seems to me, a yet greater facility in discharging them in a worthy way. But before we go our separate ways, come that I may embrace each one of you. *You have made me the happiest of fathers;* I wish to give each one of you, with the kiss of peace, a new pledge of the blessings you deserve.



The bishopric of Marseilles where Bishop de Mazenod lived from 1823 to 1861.





The church of La Major in Marseilles, the former cathedral in which Bishop de Mazenod celebrated the liturgical services from 1823 to 1861.



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