

Collection Oblate Writings II, 4

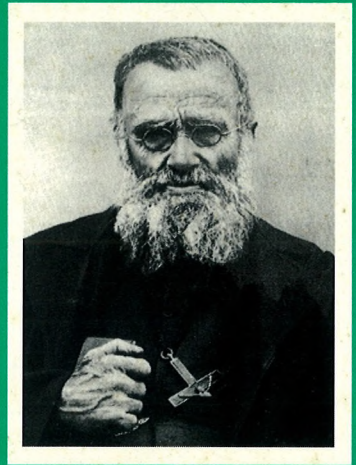
Blessed Joseph

# GERARD O.M.I.

Apostle to the Basotho (1831 - 1914)

Letters to the  
Superiors General  
and other Oblates

Spiritual Writings



General Postulation O.M.I.  
290 Via Aurelia  
Rome



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Translated by Ronald Zimmer, O.M.I.

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1991

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## Table of Contents

Chronological List of Letters . . . . .	7
Chronological List of Spiritual Writings . . . . .	10
Introduction to the Letters . . . . .	19
Letters to Superiors General and to other Oblates . . . . .	21
Introduction to the Spiritual Writings . . . . .	183
Spiritual Writings . . . . .	187
Index of Names . . . . .	261
Index of Subject Matter . . . . .	

## Illustrations

Father Gérard (about 1900) . . . . .	13
Map of Southern Africa . . . . .	14
Map showing the main missions in Lesotho . . . . .	15
Photographs of the first six Superiors General . . . . .	176
Photographs of the first Vicars Apostolic in Lesotho . . . . .	178
First manuscript writing of Father Gérard, 1851-1852 . . . . .	185
Manuscript page written by Father Gérard in 1912 . . . . .	260



## Chronological List of Letters

1. To Bishop de Mazenod, at Marseilles, September 29, 1856 .....	21
2. To Bishop de Mazenod, at Marseilles, April 5, 1858 .....	26
3. To Bishop de Mazenod, at Marseilles, August 6, 1859 .....	28
4. To Bishop de Mazenod, at Marseilles, June 10, 1860 .....	31
5. To Bishop de Mazenod, at Marseilles, April 12, 1861 .....	33
6. To Father Joseph Fabre, Sup. Gen., April 1, 1862 ...	39
7. To Father Joseph Fabre, at Paris, December 7, 1863 .....	42
8. To Father Joseph Fabre, February 4, 1864 .....	50
9. To Bishop J.F. Allard, at Pietermaritzburg, December 29, 1864 .....	55
10. To Father Joseph Fabre, June 1865 .....	50
11. To Father Justin Barret, in Natal, September 22, 1865 .....	58
12. To Father Joseph Fabre, November 6, 1865 .....	63
13. To Father Francis de Paule Henry Tempier, at Paris, at the beginning of 1866 .....	70
14. To Father Justin Barret, in Natal, July 28, 1868 .....	73
15. To Bishop J.F. Allard, in Europe, April 20, 1870 .....	75
16. To Bishop J.F. Allard, at Rome, August 2, 1875 .....	78
17. To Father Aimé Martinet, Assistant General, September 10, 1875 .....	82
18. To Bishop J.F. Allard, at Rome, April 10, 1876 .....	88
19. To Father Joseph Fabre, November 22, 1876 .....	91
20. To Father Aimé Martinet, Secretary General, July 17, 1878 .....	97
21. To Father Joseph Fabre, at Paris, October 12, 1878 ...	101
22. To Bishop C. Jolivet, Vic. Apost. of Natal, October 17, 1878 .....	106

23.	To Bishop J.F. Allard, at Rome, March 2, 1887 . . . . .	108
24.	To Father Louis Soullier, Assistant General, October 8, 1888 . . . . .	111
25.	To Father Louis Soullier, in Natal, October 16, 1888 .	113
26.	To Father Louis Soullier, in the Orange Free State, December 18, 1888 . . . . .	115
27.	To Father Louis Soullier, in the Orange Free State, December 30, 1888 . . . . .	116
28.	To Father Louis Soullier, at the Gethsemane Mission, January 12, 1889 . . . . .	117
29.	To Father Louis Soullier, at Gethsemane Mission, January 15, 1889 . . . . .	119
30.	To Father Louis Soullier, at Roma Mission, January 25, 1889 . . . . .	120
31.	To Father Louis Soullier, at Bloemfontein, March 29, 1889 . . . . .	121
32.	To Father Louis Soullier, in Natal, April 1889 . . . . .	123
33.	To Father Louis Soullier, 1st Ass. Gen., April 28, 1892 . . . . .	124
34.	To Father Louis Soullier, Vicar General, January 8, 1893 . . . . .	127
35.	To Father Louis Soullier, Superior General, June 20, 1893 . . . . .	130
36.	To Father Louis Soullier, Sup. Gen., November 30, 1893 . . . . .	131
37.	To Father Louis Soullier, Sup. Gen., April 5, 1895 . .	136
38.	To Father Louis Soullier, Sup. Gen., January 10, 1896 . . . . .	137
39.	To Father Cassien Augier, 1st Ass. Gen., January 10, 1896 . . . . .	140
40.	To Father Joseph Eugène Antoine, Vicar General, November 23, 1897 . . . . .	142
41.	To Fathers E. Derriennic and L.L.Philippe, in the Orange Free State, end of 1897 . . . . .	143
42.	To Father Cassier Augier, Superior General, January 2, 1899 . . . . .	144

43.	To Bishop C. Jolivet, Vic. Apost. of Natal, June 26, 1899 . . . . .	146
44.	To Bishop C. Jolivet, Vic. Apost. of Natal, June 27, 1901 . . . . .	148
45.	To Father Cassien Augier, Sup. Gen., beginning of 1902 . . . . .	151
46.	To Father Léon Fouquet, in British Columbia, Canada, December 26, 1902 . . . . .	153
47.	To Father Cassien Augier, Sup. Gen., January 8, 1906 . . . . .	156
48.	To Father Frédéric Porte, in Bechuanaland, August 30, 1906 . . . . .	157
49.	To Father Augustin Lavillardière, Superior General, end of 1906 . . . . .	160
50.	To Bishop Augustin Dontenwill, Superior General, 1909 . . . . .	160
51.	To Bishop Augustin Dontenwill, Sup. Gen., January 5, 1910 . . . . .	161
52.	To Bishop Augustin Dontenwill, Sup. Gen., beginning of 1910 . . . . .	162
53.	To Father Simon Scharsch, Canoncial Visitor, March 29, 1910 . . . . .	163
54.	To Bishop Augustin Dontenwill, Sup. Gen., August 2, 1910 . . . . .	164
55.	To Father Justin Barret, in Natal, end of 1910 . . . . .	166
56.	To Bishop Augustin Dontenwill, Sup. Gen., beginning of 1911 . . . . .	167
57.	To Bishop Augustin Dontenwill, Sup. Gen., August 11, 1911 . . . . .	168
58.	To Bishop Augustin Dontenwill, Sup. Gen., 1911 . . .	169
59.	To Bishop Augustin Dontenwill, Sup. Gen., July 2, 1912 . . . . .	170
60.	To Bishop Augustin Dontenwill, Sup. Gen., 1912 or 1913 . . . . .	173
61.	To Bishop Augustin Dontenwill, Sup. Gen., 1913 . . .	174

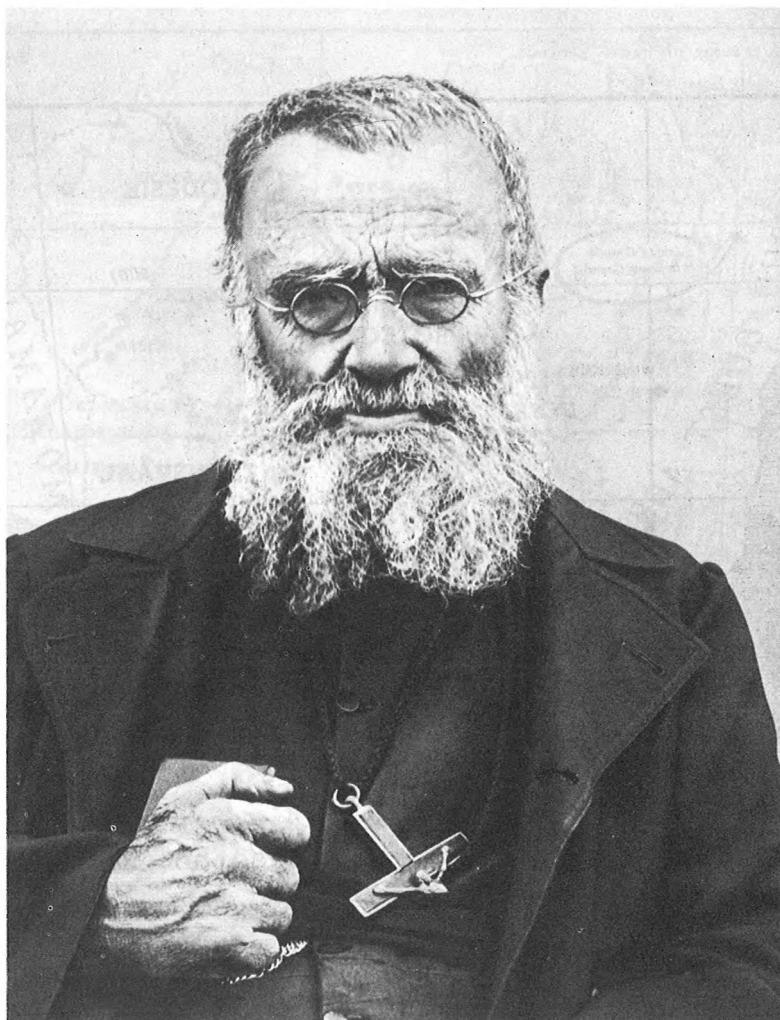
## Chronological List of Spiritual Writings

1. Novitiate, 1851-1852 .....	187
2. Oblate of Mary Immaculate, 1852 .....	189
3. Consecration to the Sacred Heart .....	192
4. Annual retreat, July 1, 1863 .....	194
5. Conference to Oblates, February 16, 1870 .....	197
6. Monthly retreat, August 8, 1870 .....	203
7. Retreat notes, June 2, 1872 .....	204
8. Reflections and resolutions, 1873-1874 .....	205
9. Reflections and resolutions, 1879 .....	208
10. Annual retreat notes, March 1880 .....	210
11. Reflections and resolutions, January 6, 1881 .....	212
12. Annual retreat, November 26, 1882 .....	214
13. Monthly retreat, September 28, 1883 .....	220
14. Annual retreat, December 17, 1883 .....	222
15. Monthly retreat notes, May 24, 1885 .....	224
16. Annual retreat, summer 1886 .....	225
17. Annual retreat, February 1889 .....	231
18. Annual retreat, February 14, 1890 .....	234
19. Annual retreat, February 14, 1892 .....	236
20. Annual retreat, March 12, 1895 .....	238
21. Annual retreat, May 24, 1896 .....	241
22. Sermon excerpts on the duties of parents, 1898 .....	242
23. Annual retreat, August 20, 1899 .....	24
24. Retreat before August 15, 1901 .....	244
25. Prayer before preaching, March 19, 1902 .....	245

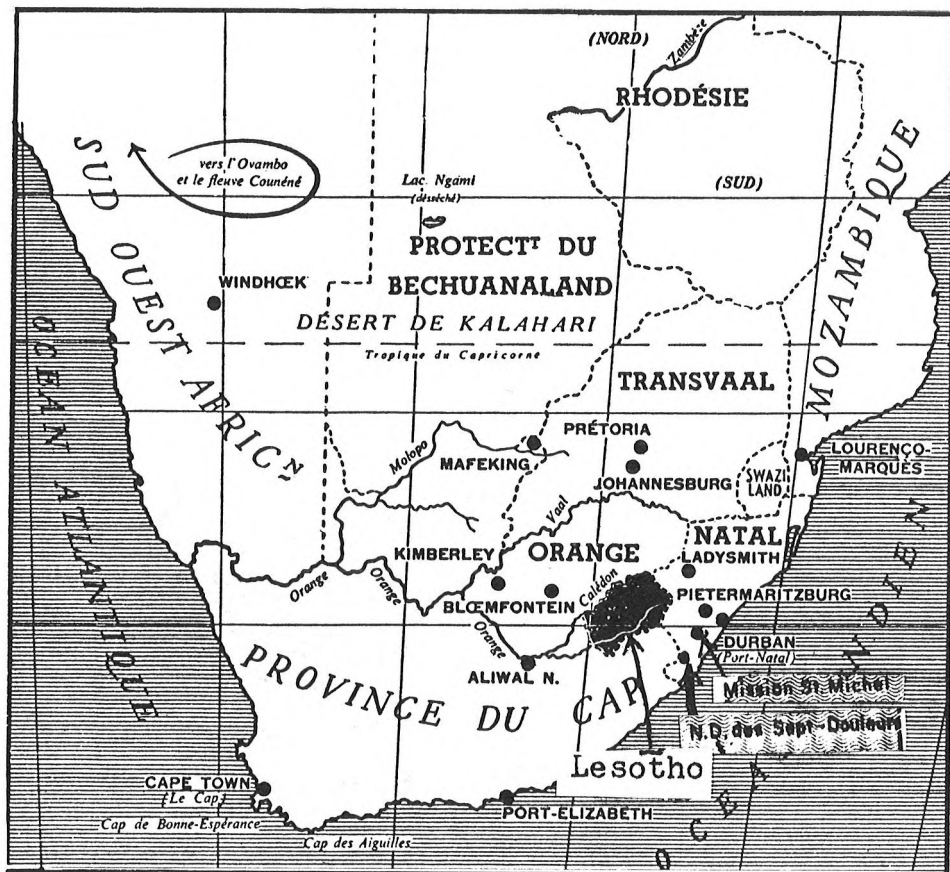
26.	Exhortation to Christians, summer 1902 . . . . .	245
27.	Confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, 1903 . . . .	246
28.	Notes and resolutions, January 16, 1904 . . . . .	247
29.	Retreat, February 8, 1904 . . . . .	248
30.	Homily notes on devotion to the Sacred Heart, May 6, 1904 . . . . .	249
31.	Homily notes on intoxication, June 26, 1904 . . . . .	249
32.	Sermon for the second Sunday after Epiphany, 1905. . . . .	250
33.	Annual retreat, February 17, 1905 . . . . .	250
34.	End of retreat, February 14 and 15, 1906 . . . . .	253
35.	Various notes, June 1906 . . . . .	254
36.	Retreat, February 18, 1907 . . . . .	256
37.	Annual retreat, started March 19, 1908 . . . . .	258
38.	Prayer, February 19, 1914 . . . . .	259



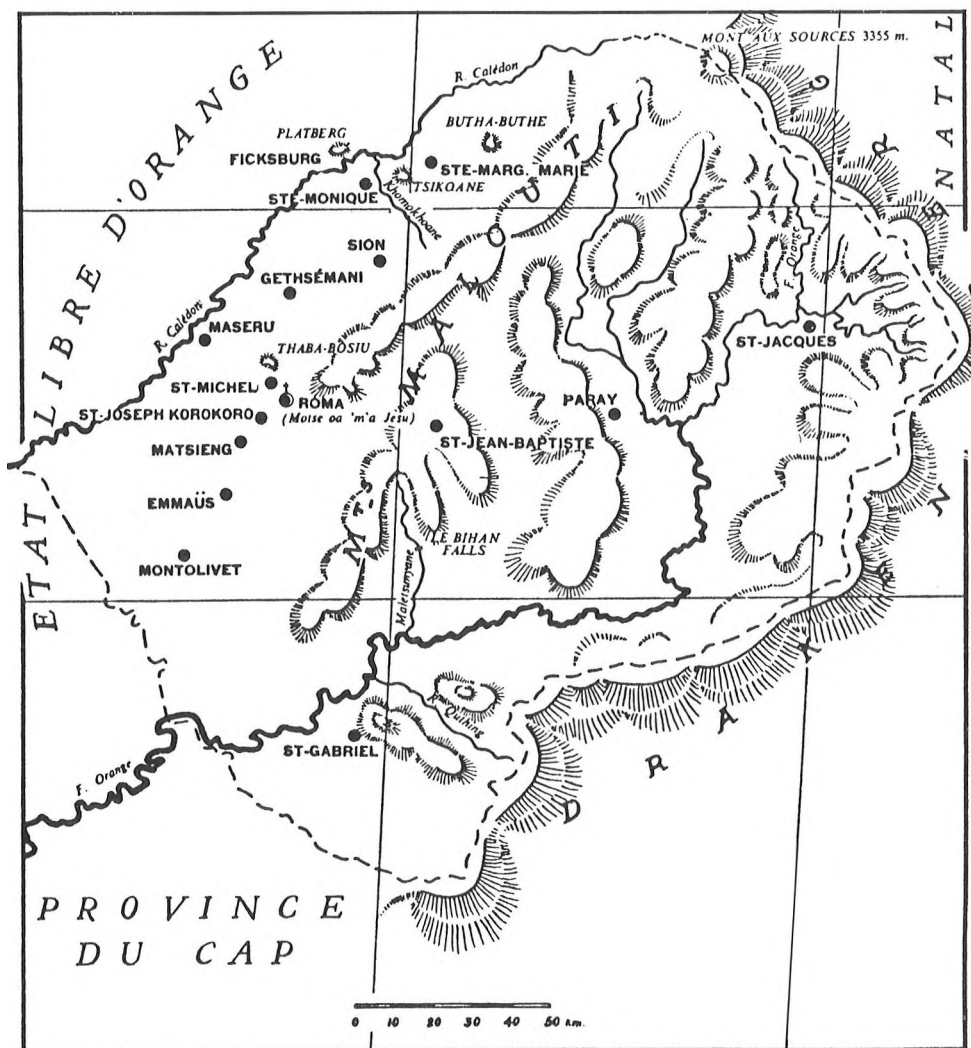




Father Joseph Gérard, O.M.I. (about 1900)



Map of Southern Africa  
 Lesotho (dark portion) in South Africa



Lesotho: its main missions



**Letters to Superiors General  
and to other Oblates**



## Introduction to the Letters

*In his second letter to Bishop Eugene de Mazenod, Father Gérard wrote: "I have long wanted to be able to fulfill the pleasant duty imposed on us of writing a letter of direction to the Superior General at least once a year."*

*This fortunate provision of the 1856 General Chapter had the good effect of making us the possessors of thirty letters of the Basothos' beloved apostle to the Congregation's first six Superiors General.<sup>1</sup> In these letters, which were meant to be "of direction", Father Gérard described in great detail his apostolic work, the actual state of the Mission and that of his soul. The other half of his sixty-one letters to Oblates<sup>2</sup> that have come down to us, were written to ecclesiastical and religious superiors, namely, Bishops Allard and Jolivet, Oblates, or to Assistants General and Canonical Visitors. The missionary's correspondence with his brother Oblates and friends seems very limited, probably due to lack of time. We have only five letters addressed to Fathers Barret, Porte and Fouquet.*

*A person reveals himself through his style and manner of writing and this is certainly true for Father Gérard's writings. In each letter we see him as he really is: humble, somewhat reserved and timid, but tenacious, a man of prayer, but especially a tireless apostle to his dear Basotho people for whom he gave his life.*

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<sup>1</sup> The best Oblates fulfilled this directive of the 1856 General Chapter. For example, the most beautiful and longest letters of Bishops Grandin and Charlebois are those addressed to the Superiors General; they are kept in the General Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Father Marcel Ferragne, O.M.I. has already duplicated fifty of these letters in his work, *Le Père Gérard nous parle*, Lesotho-documents, 1969-1972, in 4 volumes.

*The reading of several of Father Gérard's letters to his family contributed greatly in the last century to the sanctification of one of his second cousins, a Visitation nun,<sup>3</sup> and to the missionary vocation of the future Bishop Cenez, Lesotho's first Apostolic Vicar.<sup>4</sup> By means of his letters written to Oblates and published<sup>5</sup> during the Marian Year, may the Blessed Joseph Gérard stimulate his religious brothers in their desire for holiness and arouse missionary vocations in today's youth.*

Father Yvon Beaudoin, O.M.I.

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<sup>3</sup> Father Gérard wrote about twenty letters to Sister Anne Madeleine after 1890.

<sup>4</sup> During the process for Father Gérard's cause, in 1940-1941, Bishop Cenez said: "It was during my stay at the Major Seminary in Nancy that I began to become acquainted with him through some information from a fellow seminarian, Mourot, his second cousin, and after that I started to write to the Servant of God; this helped me to decide on a vocation to the missionary life in Basutoland as an Oblate of Mary Immaculate." Cf. *Summarium super introductione causae*, p. 279.

<sup>5</sup> We are grateful to those who helped in preparing this volume; Father Adolphe Steffanus, O.M.I., who verified the text's conformity to the original and added notes, and Father Laurent Roy, O.M.I., who helped in the tiresome work of proof-reading the French edition.



## Letters to Superiors General and Other Oblates

### 1 - [To Bishop de Mazenod at Marseilles].<sup>1</sup>

*First impressions. The Zulus' prejudices against the missionaries. Pagan beliefs. Saved from drowning through Mary's protection.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Pietermaritzburg, September 29, 1856.

My Lord and beloved Father,

... Our stay with the Africans<sup>2</sup> convinced us that the establishment of the Christian religion among them would meet with very great difficulty. They are too attached to their way of life, their evil habits, their superstitious feasts, and especially their unbelievable laziness. They have very little interest in White mans' ways, and prefer their uncivilized indifference: They say, "Let the White people leave us alone to live as we please."

During this year we were speaking about taking their children to the city for school. They protested the idea, for fear that we would make *amakolwa* of them, that is, believers; that is what they call the Africans converted by the Protestant ministers. They say: "Why do the White people want our children in their schools? So, let them send theirs to ours!"

In general, the Africans in this colony are very prejudiced against the missionaries. These poor people (Zulus)

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<sup>1</sup> Letter published in *Missions de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, 1862, p. 345 and ff.; we have not found the original of this or any of the following letters that were published in *Missions O.M.I.*

<sup>2</sup> The word used is "Kaffirs". It is derived from the Arabic "Kafir" (unbeliever) and designated the Blacks of southern Africa (especially those of the Southe-east) named (Kaffraria) by contemporary geographers. This vague ethnic term is only used in a pejorative sense today. Father Gérard did not have that understanding and used a word which was known by people to whom he wrote.

have been accustomed by the Protestants to treat the Christian religion as a fairy tale; Adam and Eve, Our Lord Jesus Christ are for them what Alice in Wonderland is for us.

The few Africans who have been converted by the Protestants are just as depraved as [ ... ] the others, but quite prouder and more mischievous.

My Lord, it is difficult to make these poor Africans, who are so biased, understand that they have been created to know and serve God. They claim to have their own religion just as the Whites have theirs. Before the Europeans came to this country, the Africans, and possibly a great number of them still hold this opinion, the Africans, as I say, used to believe that the first men came from river plants, that the All Great One, *Unkulunkulu*, shook and stirred up one day with a great wind. That is the naive opinion that I overheard once from an African's mouth. He was very astonished when he saw my cross. After admiring it for a long time, he said to those nearby: Now I understand very well that the Whites are more clever than we are: certainly, they come from a different sort of water plant than we Blacks do.

They have an idea of the divinity, but it is very vague and general, and they have not even the least practice of cult to God. The god that they love is a herd of cows; they are resolved to do anything for a cow.

However, they do practice ancestor worship. In their eyes these spirits have their heaven in the body of a hideous serpent. If this serpent comes into the *kraal*<sup>3</sup> enclosure, they allow it to move around freely, since they say it is the spirit. Bad luck to anyone who would drive it away or kill it. They claim that these spirits have great power; they are the ones who bring death or grant life. Almost every day, they offer sacrifices to them, either to appease them or to win their favor. So, if a man is sick, they go to consult a witch doctor; he answers that the spirit wants some meat, so, they must kill

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<sup>3</sup> Kraal: several huts in a group; ordinarily, there were as many huts as women with children (note 1, in *Missions O.M.I.*, p. 347).

such or such a cow, such or such an animal, of whatever color he determines. They kill the animal. All the neighbors eagerly come to share in the victim; they enjoy themselves immensely, they drink a large quantity of African beer. At the end, one of those present demands silence and gives a short talk directed to the spirits. If the sick person does not improve, they have another consultation, kill a bigger animal, have another feast. They trust their doctors so much that they will kill up to 7 or 8 cows. If the patient does not get better, the doctor declares that is from natural causes and not wanted by the spirits. So, could there be a more comfortable and profitable religion for the poor [Africans] *quorum Deus venter est*<sup>4</sup>.

Nevertheless, my Lord, these superstitious practices to which the Africans are strongly attached, are only a small obstacle compared to that of polygamy and their corrupt customs, the full depravity of which it would be hard for anyone in Europe to imagine. If there was not a great need, I would never tarnish my pen by giving an account of all that I have been able to observe or hear. It is enough for me to tell you that to be among the Africans we need Mary Immaculate to protect us in a special way.

My Lord, I want to tell you a little anecdote which brings out clearly this good Mother's protection in my regard; I love to believe that it is she who saved my life, in spite of my unworthiness. The testimony about it of [the Zulu] who was with me is just as noteworthy:

During last May, the month dedicated to Mary, the Bishop called me to the city. I left with a young African who was very devoted to us. At sunset, we came to the banks of the river called *Umkomazi*. During the rainy season, it can be 15 feet deep, but this time the water was low. I didn't even think of calling some Africans who knew how to swim. So, I sent the African who was with me to investigate the crossing. He crossed quite well almost the entire river. After recom-

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<sup>4</sup> Phil. 3, 19.

mending myself to God, making the sign of the cross and an act of contrition, we went into the water holding each other firmly by the hand. We had only about four or five more meters of distance to cross to reach the shore, but the current seemed to me to be deeper and faster. I did not consider the choice that I should have taken, to retrace our steps; it seemed to me that we were almost at our destination and that night was coming on quickly. I also trusted my African who knew how to swim to some extent. But, we had scarcely taken two more steps forward than we sunk into the river bed which had been carved out more deeply by the water near the shore. We were soon turned over under the water, separated from one another. Water filled my mouth and I could scarcely breathe.

Then I thought seriously that this was the last day of my life, and that I was going to die in the water. We were carried along that way a great distance. However, I did not lose consciousness, I heard the water above me and felt the poor African under my feet. Finally, I don't know how it happened, but we were thrown by the current against the river bank. It was quite a high bank and some stones were jutting out of it.

After many tries, we were able to obtain a good hold on one of those jutting rocks on the bank, to cling to it and get out of the river; that was the result of our final efforts. My companion, as it would seem, got out first, and helped me to climb out by holding out his hand to me.

His money and his *blanket*<sup>5</sup> which he had wound around his neck was all lost. Shivering and weeping for joy, I waited for a swimmer, called from nearby, to bring our luggage which we had left on the other shore.

I wanted to ask my poor African what impression the danger we had experienced and come through had made on him and the way we had been saved. Well, I said to him, do you know how we were able to get out of the deep water?

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<sup>5</sup> An English word from which the author formed a French word: "blanket"; a covering.

- Oh, Chief, he replied with great emotion, it is through God alone that we have been saved. *Sa sindiswa inkosi ephezlu yodwa*. My dear Father, I certainly did not expect such an answer from an African.

Bishop Allard reimbursed him for what he had lost, and, besides that, gave him a very beautiful coat that a very pious captain of a French vessel had given us at Mauritius.<sup>6</sup>

I long for the moment when we will be able to start our Mission again with greater zeal. I deeply love the Mission among the Africans, even though it seems very difficult to me and very unrewarding. The times that we had something to suffer were most precious.

Just as I was about to close this letter, we have learned some very sad news: Your Grace is through our correspondence undoubtedly acquainted with the great *Amazulu*<sup>7</sup> tribe outside of this colony, whose chief is called Panda. This chief, having become old, recently divided his kingdom between his two sons.

But, among the Africans, there is a proverb: the one who knows how to fight and conquer is the chief.

Thus, the two brothers went to war. One of the contestants wanted to go through the colony to find help, but the magistrates were against it, so he had to retrace his steps. His adversary came to meet him on the banks of the river Tugela. The fighting went on from 4 o'clock in the morning till 6 o'clock in the evening; more than 6,000 men fell on the battle field.

You see, my Lord, what cruelty. Their entire weaponry consists in metal spears. The magistrate who went to the place said that a field of 4 kilometers was strewn with bodies. We are assumed that the victors went to the old chief's place to kill him. That is, finally, the common destiny reserved to these poor African chiefs.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

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<sup>6</sup> Mauritius Island.

<sup>7</sup> Zulu people.

## 2 - [To Bishop de Mazenod at Marseilles].<sup>8</sup>

*Temporary suspension of the Zulu Mission. "With trust in man, not one shoot of grain; but with hope in almighty God, many shoots."*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Pietermaritzburg, April 5, 1858.

For a very long time I have wanted to carry out the very pleasant task imposed on us to write to your Lordship at least once a year, but I have always had to suffer that I could not do it more leisurely. Today, the good Lord arranged an excellent opportunity for me; I want to profit by it and redeem myself fully, communicating heart to heart, with the simplicity of a child toward his most loving father.

First, your Lordship knows that the Mission to the Africans has been suspended now for two years. During this time I have been at work, serving the little Irish Catholic congregation at Pietermaritzburg along with Father Barret. Thanks to the Lord, I did not waste the time. I taught catechism to children, heard their confessions, and prepared myself as best as I could for a new effort.

During the last two months, Father Bompert and I have begun it again. We went out first to prepare several huts to receive the Bishop and the Brother, as well as to shelter us while we build the chapel. In less than a month and with the help of an African we have put up three small huts; one of them about six feet in diameter for his Lordship, another of about ten feet for the kitchen and our Africans, and third for your three servants and sons, Father Bompert, Brother Bernard and myself. The Bishop congratulated us on our talent; he was very astonished to find a table, very solid home-made chairs, quite elegant straw beds, all that at St. Michael's, even though all we had for tools were two little hatchets and two scythes.

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<sup>8</sup> Letter published in *Missions O.M.I.*, 1862, p. 351 ff.

Now, I should tell you something about the Bishop's arrival at the Mission. Bishop Allard came here one day, in extreme fatigue, scarcely able to stand up. His Lordship had made almost the entire trip on foot, under a burning sun. It seems to me that the Bishop should spare himself a little more. These trips are too long and laborious for people of advanced age, especially when they are made on foot.

Building the chapel will take a considerable amount of time. Will we succeed? We don't know what will happen to us. However, I especially want your Lordship to know all the obstacles that we will meet here.

You already know some of them. Even recently a Protestant minister, a medical doctor, has just established himself near us, about three leagues from here.

What an obstacle for the poor Africans to see this chaos of various religions; they are already so indifferent and filled with prejudice. At this man's place, they will hear it said that a Christian may have several wives, and at our place, they will hear that they may have only one. This minister has also brought with him a rather large number of Protestant Africans who are already aware of and share in the hatred of Protestants for Catholics.

Undoubtedly, these are only the material obstacles that Providence allows in order to make his work more evident, so I hope. If we hope in human efforts, there will be no results, but with hope in Almighty God, the results will be great. So, I am not at all discouraged ...

Father Sabon is on the point of baptizing a Protestant gentleman and his wife.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

### 3 - [To Bishop de Mazenod at Marseilles].<sup>9</sup>

*Men's opposition to their wives' attendance at the Mission services. The devil's two strongholds: diviners (priests of the ancestor-worship religion) and polygamy.*

Saint Michael's Mission, August 6, 1859.

How happy I am to be finally free enough to spend a few moments with your Lordship. I have been longing for this moment for some time now, and your good fatherly heart will make you understand why.

For us, this year has been spent in all kinds of manual work. We had to make ourselves everything to everyone: carters, masons, carpenters, woodcutters in the forest two miles away, but it was always with a lot of joy because it was for the good Lord. After all, who would have been able to complain when we saw our venerable Bishop himself, sometimes with his hands full of mud, working beside us?

It is scarcely two months since we put the final touches on the chapel at Saint Michael's. We have nothing more to do on that score. Your sons, after a year of hard labor, have managed to put up with their own hands a temple to the Lord on this land that is still covered with the darkness of paganism. We now have the ineffable joy of having our divine Savior in our midst, both day and night. Moreover — how can I tell you about it without being deeply moved — His Lordship and I have been able to set up two cells for ourselves behind the chapel, and there we rest and study only a few feet from the holy altar; there is only a wall in between. Don't you yourself seem to hear our good Master saying continually to your little family: *Nolite timere, pusillus grex, ego vobiscum sum*.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, it was under these good omens that we began our new venture, I could say almost into the lists; for from the first day of the Mission's opening, we have had to struggle.

<sup>9</sup> Letter published in *Missions O.M.I.*, 1862, p. 353 ff.

<sup>10</sup> Luke 12, 32.



The men were agreed never to allow their wives to take part in the services at the Mission. We counted only three of them at the first gathering.

Since then, they have relented somewhat in their rigid stratagems as a consequence of our frequent visits. It is very edifying to hear that [pagans] in other countries ask insistently for missionaries; here, it is the opposite, the Africans would gladly agree never to see us among them. They obviously fear that they will be obliged to change their style of life, and they are a people who consider life as one round of amusements. Especially the men have nothing to do or think about; to go here and there to drink beer, eat meat, hunt, that is their total occupation. Their clothes, unfortunately, do not cost them very much since they are almost completely naked.

We are not surprised that our presence and words begin to arouse ill-humor in them.

You already know that Satan has two main strongholds among the Africans: diviners and polygamy. Last Sunday, I began by attacking the white man's witchcraft, that is, that of Europeans, laying on them too many of the things that the diviners do among the Africans; it was very necessary to make this diversion so as not to anger them too much, and to prepare the way for another instruction on the Africans' diviners. Grant that Saint Michael and his angels come to our aid against their old enemy who reigns here as absolute master!

Now we have very near her, a great diviner of the first class. He is the country's oracle. Every day, one can see Africans coming from every direction to consult him. That earns him a lot of money and cattle, for no money, no divining. Among the Africans diviners are like the priests of the ancestor-worship religion. It is with these spirits that they always try to communicate, to gain from them information they want about sicknesses, the death of individuals, lost articles, etc.

To achieve this communication with the spirits, they keep a very austere food diet; they expose their bodies to

much suffering and go as far as cruelly scourging themselves. They often dive into water to see the spirits and speak with them. They go to lonely places, day and night, which terrorize and frighten them for the same purpose. But they especially perform exhausting dances which wear them out and leave them in a pitiful state. It is not surprising that in this exhausted and feverish state they end up falling under the devil's influence and say and do extraordinary things which mislead and win over the poor Africans. And then, in a case when the diviner is embarrassed, he always knows how to get himself out of trouble by clever language, allowing those who consult him to guess, rather than giving them clear, precise advice. Often they use ambiguous language as the ancient oracles did. But what is most surprising is that the Africans allow themselves to be tricked without suspecting the deception of these sorcerers. They have recourse to them mainly in a case of illness or death, to find out the cause of the evil spell. If the sickness or death is from provoked spirits, they offer them beef or cattle to appease them. I know one man who offered as many as five cows, which did not stop his wife from dying.

Satan's second stronghold is polygamy. I don't dare speak to you about it, and, what is more, there are some things that one knows but can only weep over them before God. It suffices to say that this traffic is more lively than ever all around us. I am very grateful to your Lordship for having suggested to our venerable Bishop that he take the lead among us; his habitual presence here is a great blessing, to guide our youth and inexperience. He is very well and he edifies us greatly by the zeal he puts into studying the language, which is very difficult, especially at his age. Father Bompert understands the language and already speaks it quite well. I am pleased to pass on to them what little I know, and so to be of some service to our dear Mission ...

In this vicariate there are hundreds of tribes and thousands of people whose lot is so much more worthy of pity because they do not have the least idea of their miserable state.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

**4 - [To Bishop de Mazenod at Marseilles].<sup>11</sup>**

*Obstinacy: scorn for the Christian religion. Secret baptism of a child, in articulo mortis.*

[Saint Michael's Mission], June 10, 1860.

I don't know how to express to you all the joy and consolation that I felt when I received the letter that your Lordship deigned to write me.<sup>12</sup> In this favor I saw a new powerful motive to rouse myself to fervor and courage, so indispensable for every missionary, but especially for missionaries among the Africans. A thousand thanks, my dear Father, for the interest that you show to the least of your sons.

Two months ago, we were all on retreat at Pietermaritzburg; we spent some delightful days together, but too short ...

Here, a missionary has to have great audacity, a stone face to demand respect from the Africans, and sometimes, from their chiefs. I do not spare them when they allow themselves to use the slightest unbecoming language.

Some time ago, we were received by two chiefs who were in the most shocking nudity; we harangued one of them about it, turning our backs on him and treating him as lower than an animal; we didn't spare the other one; the next day, they came to us, wearing a few shreds of hide on their belts for clothes. What courage one has to have to do ministry among these beings where shame is unknown! [ ... ]

At this moment, we are in the midst of the most painful circumstances; everything seems lost for good in this place. The Africans are becoming more and more hard of heart. The women who were at first held back by their husbands, were after that able to come to the chapel, but that was only out of fear or the desire to please. I never got anything out of them at catechism. The men, except for three or four, used to react in a very contemptible way, making fun of everything, pretend-

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<sup>11</sup> Letter published in *Missions O.M.I.*, 1862, p. 356 ff.

<sup>12</sup> That of October 28, 1859, cf. *Oblate Writings*, vol. 4, pp. 216-217.

ing to know nothing, not even God's name or the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh! How one's heart breaks at times. Prayer, consisting only of the Our Father translated into African, they recite only out of pretense. They usually ridicule everything during their pleasure parties. Even the baptismal water is not spared. The talk on death made them cry out; they threatened to never come again, if we spoke to them about it again. Finally, the instruction on hell did not affect them at all because they do not want to believe in it; they usually make the same objections against the truths of our holy religion as do the impious European. Unfortunately, they all take a firm stand behind their chiefs. No one is courageous enough to keep apart and be converted. That is our present state at Saint Michael's. I am not at all discouraged; I am content in the position you have given me, and if I had to start over, the poor Africans would still be my preference ...

Now, forgive my simplicity; if a child had but a single flower, he would still find it a great pleasure to offer it to his father. Well. A very small flower has appeared in this rocky soil which we are cultivating with its brambles and thorns; God, then, plucked it by the hand of his angels lest someday it be trampled upon by passers by ... Yes, dearest Father, accept this little flower.

Several weeks ago, we gave new life through baptismal water to a small nine-month-old baby girl who was sick. We could do this only by using some stratagem. Pretending to give her some remedy, we started by washing her well from head to foot. At the same time, as you can well guess, we were happy to direct our intention and pronounce the sacramental formula. Then we gave her a few grains of rice and a little sugar. The little child regained health long enough so that the Africans would not suspect our action. Since then, the good Lord has withdrawn her from this world of abominations. Now she is an angel in paradise, praying for us and for her people. Your lively faith, which knows the price of a single soul, will kindly receive this account.

We are talking about several people who are seeking to

enter the bosom of our Catholic Church, among others, a lawyer.

All your sons in Natal are in good health. The priests who are serving the two congregations at Pietermaritzburg and d'Urban<sup>13</sup> see the number of their flocks increase, due mainly to the immigrants who are coming here from all over.

Bishop Allard, our venerable superior, is also in good health; in spite of his already advanced age, His Lordship still travels on foot and in the same poverty as the apostles ...

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

### 5- [To Bishop de Mazenod, at Marseilles].<sup>14</sup>

*Seven children baptized in articulo mortis. Dysentary epidemic. Self-interested attendance at instructions. The Founder's illness.*

Mission of our Lady of Seven Sorrows,  
April 12, 1861.

Last month the letter your Lordship was pleased to write me<sup>15</sup> arrived safely here in our desert. It was a day of great rejoicing for me. You would have to be here among the Africans to understand how happy I felt. Yes, my dearest Father, my eyes devoured every encouraging word that you addressed to me. I seemed to enjoy again some of the delightful moments that our Fathers and Brothers experience in your presence.

Your Lordship, you understand how much your sons, especially those among the Africans, need to hear often the voice of their general inspiring them in almost hopeless battles. The poor soldier feels his heart gaining strength and his courage growing when he hears his leader cry out to him: Be a true soldier of Christ, a good Oblate, and you will pierce the enemies' battle lines. Victory is assured by your perseverance.

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<sup>13</sup> Former spelling for Durban.

<sup>14</sup> Letter published in *Missions O.M.I.*, 1862, p. 359 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Letter of September 14, 1860, cf. *Oblate Writings*, vol. 4, pp. 220-222.

Today, I hasten to give you all the required details on our Mission of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows. I understand how necessary it is that you have precise information about this Mission among the Africans, so that you can guide yourself in choosing the men to be sent here.

First of all, I want to tell you about a favor granted to me by Saint Joseph, your patron and mine, towards whom I maintain a genuine devotion. I had asked him for the grace to be able to baptize, during the month dedicated to him, a young African child who could then go to heaven to bless him together with the angels; and this Patron saint, no doubt because of your good prayers, granted me this favor for two children, one of whom is already in heaven praying for his poor countrymen. I would like to have many child baptisms to tell you about; how great would be your joy, dearest Father! But it is very rare, here, that we are able to get into the presence of sick children, since the Africans are utterly distrustful. However, I have been able to baptize up to seven of them here; almost all have died. I had to administer holy baptism under the pretext of washing them well so as to prepare them for other remedies; otherwise, an African would never allow such a religious action to be carried out for his child.

I have been less fortunate with adults. God has given me the opportunity to acquire greater strength of character. For a whole month I especially had to struggle with my timidity. It was at the time that an illness broke out here. The Africans who had shown the greatest attachment to us then manifested the greatest repugnance, I could even say the greatest opposition, when I felt it my duty to speak to the sick. They sent me away with great insolence. They did not want me to speak to them of religion. They said that my presence prevented the *spirit of healing* to work, to carry out its effects. I resisted and made every effort to carry out my duty. But what painful occasions for me to witness daily this obstinate unbelief right unto death. What a frightening future I would have liked to spare them, even to the point of shedding my blood. But, no, they preferred to die as Africans, as they had lived ...

Your Lordship already knows that we arrived here in July, 1860. The Protestants accused us of insanity for coming into these places, into what they refer to as a veritable hole; but the foolishness of the cross is the wisdom of God. We wanted to give an impressive example to all the Africans that it was only charity which brought us to them, and not love of riches or our own comfort.

The sanctuary in our chapel is all decorated with red and white calico; on the back there is an image of the Blessed Virgin and a painting, very well done by good Father Barret, depicting Our Lord crowned with thorns. I don't have to tell you that the entire building is of wood covered with mortar. Our little hut is made of straw from top to bottom; there we have prepared four cells and a dining room. It is the Bishop's palace, and, at present the motherhouse of the Vicariate ...

When everything was prepared for the Mission's religious program, we were eager to go and proclaim this good news in each of the kraals. These huts are scattered here and there, at a distance from one another because of the many cattle which need a lot of pasture area. Around us, within the radius of a league and a half, there are about twenty kraals.

I cannot say that they eagerly accepted, as in other Missions, our invitation to come to the chapel; that is unknown in Africa. Here we must begin the Mission hoping against hope. Some responded to my invitation with words that indicated that they had already made up their minds to let nothing go of their bad habits: Why wouldn't we go on *Sondo* (the word they have taken from the English, Sunday), they said, what difference does it make? we go on Sondo, sit down, listen to the word of the chief on high, and that's all; then, we can return home to our own kraals.

That is the notion that Africans have of religion. That is all that they want to grant to the missionaries, to put in an appearance in the chapel.

On the first Sunday the attendance was quite large. On the second Sunday it was still satisfactory. But after their cu-

riosity had been satisfied (in religious matters, this curiosity is not very keen among the Africans), and after they have perceived more clearly the purpose of our coming among them, that is, their salvation, their entering into the right road, they became indignant. It was then that one of the more influential ones told me, speaking for all the others, that there was only one thing that kept the Blacks from following the Whites in their religion, and that thing was that they would have to leave their wives ... Their wives, that is the little matter, as small as the end of your little finger, they say. It is a figure of speech to denote an immense and fundamental problem.

However, we carefully avoided treating that question right from the beginning. If we had done so, we would have had to pack our bags and leave. We must have great prudence in dealing with people so poorly disposed. Several times when treating of subjects relevant to their state, as for example, in making them see that they were unfortunate, that they did not know God, that they did not love him, it was enough to make them stamp their feet to the point of interrupting my preaching. To hear them speak, they are people who love God, who pray to him daily, who never kill anyone and are never guilty of any stealing. But they say all that only to mislead us. Thus it is not so much a matter of instructing them as of refuting the specious arguments they use so as to remain in unbelief.

During the months of December and January, our controversy was somewhat suspended. The reason was dysentery, unknown among the Africans until then. Since then, the Mission program has been suffering on account of it. The local chief forbade all communications between kraals; I was the only one who used to go from one to the other in order to see the sick.

There were now only two kraals, close by to the chapel, who came to listen to us. They seemed to be interested in us, and it was because of that that they wanted to play a trick on us. The women started to play their part. Two of them came one day to ask me to give them special instructions; the conclusion of their talk included an insistent request to give them



clothes, because they were ashamed, they said, to come *indecent* to the chapel, that is, without clothes. They say of a well-dressed man that he is an accomplished man. I said nothing at the time, but understood the full meaning of that request. I set a time and a day for them. They were faithful to the meeting, and brought several of their companions with them. I would have thrilled with joy if I had not understood the cunning and deceit of these [people]. I prayed to God ardently that he change the bad dispositions of these hearts and to prepare them to receive his grace.

I started my instructions, and repeated them several times. Finally, one day the most spiritual of them all said to me just when I was teaching them to kneel down: How can we pray and kneel if you do not give us any clothes? That is all that they wanted to obtain by this appearance of fidelity; to clothe and decorate themselves and remain pagans. The men also took part in the ruse, but for another motive. Since dysentery was creating great havoc, they came to the chapel with their wives and children and offered to visit it more often, if I wished it. Here, again, I had a moment of hope that promptly evaporated. As soon as I spoke of a sincere conversion, everything was at an end; they had come to the religious services only to escape the plague. And as several of them succumbed to the sickness, they reproached God for striking those who wanted to serve him.

Once the sickness had passed, the Africans started taking the road to the Mission again, but with a truly distressing negligence. I was not able to bring about the least change. I especially tried to win over several of them who seemed less ill disposed; among others, a woman and an very intelligent man who had five wives. But what stubbornness! — Ah! Why didn't you come sooner, when we were young and had only one wife? Now we are too old to change, to become righteous ... Besides, they often told me, it is not your fault; you have instructed us in the word of the chief on high; do not be heavy hearted, do not be sad. Yes, others say, with a truly frightening

carelessness, we will go to the everlasting fire, no one will weep for us on that account, it will be our own fault ...

Venerable Father, how sad all this is! I understand how much your heart, so great, so zealous for Our Lord's interest, will be afflicted to hear always such distressing news. And how it wounds us to have before our eyes continually such a display of obstinacy and refusal. How can tears not stream from your eyes, when we think of the eternal abyss into which these pagans are going to throw themselves, laughing all the while, dancing and giving themselves up every day to pleasure parties? They have a feast every day. In the space of two months, they have killed more than 30 cows or oxen to enjoy themselves, and to worship the spirits of the ancestors and thus win their favor. And so I cannot but consider each kraal like a villa of the ancient Romans. There are as many pleasures, less refined undoubtedly, but they are always pleasures which remove them none the less from God's kingdom.

When I received your letter, I was delighted with your advice to cast our nets further on, to some tribe that the Protestants have not yet visited. Yes, my Lord, we are going to look for a more simple and poorer tribe which, with God's grace, will serve as the foundation of the African Church. Could it be that more is necessary for this arid, desolate land than just to be watered with our sweat? Could it be that more is demanded than anguish in the hearts of its missionaries? Who knows what is awaiting us elsewhere? In any case, it is all in God's hands and those of Mary Immaculate. *If we live, we live for the Lord; if we die, we die for the Lord, so that alive or dead, we belong to the Lord!*<sup>16</sup>

Bless this poor Mission which has brought forth only brambles and thorns to the present, [ ... ] I recommend myself to your fatherly prayers, to those of your Assistants General, and to the whole Congregation.

I am here with Father Le Bihan who is very earnest in learning the language; he is always dedicated to everything

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<sup>16</sup> Rom. 14, 8.

and everyone. If I would allow him, he would do the cooking every day, for we have neither Brothers nor domestic help and so we share the inconvenience with one another to some extent.

May 1861. I have just learnt that your Lordship has fallen seriously ill over these last four months. O venerable Father, how can I express to you all our pain and anxiety ...

We remember with edification your great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and we are going to appeal to this Sacred Heart with the most ardent confidence.

[J. Gérard, O.M.I.]

## 6 - [To Father Joseph Fabre, Superior General].<sup>17</sup>

*Trip to the Orange Free State. The hospitality of the Protestant farmers, of Dutch or French origin. First visit to King Moshoeshoe who permitted the foundation of Catholic Missions in Lesotho.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Pietermaritzburg, April 1, 1862.

... I think that our venerable Bishop and Superior has given you many details about our trip to the *Free State*.<sup>18</sup> As we left each Mission, the thought of God's mercy always came to my mind. That was very natural. My poor young missionary heart had not yet savored that interior happiness one feels when the good Lord uses our weakness to reconcile poor sinners to himself. The fruit of this excursion was therefore very satisfactory. Even the Protestants were edified in seeing our venerable Bishop, coming from so far away, in such a simple and humble manner, braving the sun's intense heat and

<sup>17</sup> Letter published in *Missions O.M.I.*, 1864, p. 32 ff.

<sup>18</sup> The Orange Free State, northwest of Lesotho. Bishop Allard and Father Gérard had crossed it on their way to visit King Moshoeshoe. This first visit was in February 1862. Cf. Allard to Fabre, in *Missions O.M.I.*, 1862, p. 378 ff., especially pp. 384-388. Fifty years later, in a letter of October 1910, to Sister Anne Madeleine, Father Gérard gave some details of this visit.

the inclement weather, satisfied with such plain food, sleeping on the hard ground or on the grass along the road, which happens to us at times as we go here and there looking for the strayed sheep. Never, they said, have they seen, and probably never will see, their ministers doing the same thing for their flock. We had the joy of receiving a Protestant woman into the Catholic Church and another Dutch woman intends to go to the city to complete her conversion. A gentleman of the country who came to the religious exercises at a retreat in a certain place, said to one of our Catholics: if the Bishop were to stay here with us for some time, I would become Catholic.

The country that we passed through is very rich in herds of sheep, cattle and horses. But it is very arid: it is hard to grasp how so many herds, as many as 6,000 to 9,000 sheep on a single farm, can find something to eat on this rocky soil, which reminds us of the plains of Crau. The Dutch people who live in these areas are independent and form a sort of republic. They still do not have police nor army. For the most part they have been born in this country and resent those from Holland on account of their skill. Many are of French origin; they emigrated to Africa at the time of the repeal of the Edict of Nantes. And so they have a very deep grudge against the Catholic Church, which, they say, persecuted them and obliged them to flee in order to save their lives and religion. Nevertheless, they are good people deep down; they welcomed us everywhere with great hospitality, and we were able to witness their simplicity and patriarchal customs.

One day we went to knock at the door of a rich farmer, the father of a large family. When they asked us who we were the Bishop replied in English: - I am the Catholic Bishop of Natal, and this is my reverend Secretary. They took us immediately into the living room where we were presented to the lady of the house; they hastened to serve us coffee, a general custom among this people who drink coffee at any hour of the day. When evening came, we witnessed all that happens inside the life of these families. The father and mother were seated near a little table, conversing with a friend from nearby who

had just come in. The rest of the family, the eldest of whom was about fifteen years old, came and went seriously and in silence, preparing the table and supper. When everything was ready, a little girl came forward with a little bag containing a pile of old books: they were song books. Each one came up to the table and took one for himself. As head of the family, the father started to recite a prayer in a very solemn tone; then he announced a psalm. And so, after a pause, all the people, from the oldest to the youngest, began to sing with full voice, each one doing his part. A second prayer followed the psalm. For myself, from the far corner of the room where I was, I would have gladly expressed my great enjoyment at hearing the disharmony of this singing group. But by biting my tongue I was able to keep a straight face. A serious thought quickly came to my mind. How many Catholics allow themselves to be swayed by human respect and do not say their prayers before and after meals, while these poor people, faithful to their traditions, did not fear the presence of a Catholic bishop and priest.

I say nothing of another event which preceded the one I just described to you: I mean the washing of the family members' feet by a young girl.

You have learned the favorable result of our visit to one of the most powerful kings of South Africa, Moshoeshoe, the lion cub of the mountain, and terror of the *Free State*. We obtained permission to begin Missions among his people; he counts on that very much. May we soon have the additional help of lay brothers so as to set up this Mission on a solid basis. I am not averse to doing the duties of a lay brother, very often we all have had this honor. But experience proves that without Brothers we can establish Missions among the Africans only with the greatest difficulty ...

Bless this future Mission. I recommend it to your good prayers and those of our Congregation's dear Fathers and Brothers.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

## 7 - [To Father J. Fabre, Superior General, at Paris].<sup>19</sup>

*The works of installation at the Mother of Jesus Village (Motse-oa-'M'a Jesu), the future Mission of Roma. November the first, 1863: official opening of the Mission, in the presence of King Moshoeshoe. His discourse during Mass. His desire to hold the Virgin's statue in his hands. Plan for a school. Women in a situation of inferiority. A Sisters' convent to eventually accept Christian women.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

[Mother of Jesus Village], December 7, 1863.

Very reverend and dear Father,

For a long time I have been reproaching myself for neglecting to give you news of our Mission among the Basotho.<sup>20</sup>

I know how much you are interested in everything that we are doing or propose to do; and how much you can help us by your prayers, advice, and assistance that we await from you. It was with deep regret that I found myself unable to fulfill this duty. You will find it hard to believe, and yet, we have been so busy with the work on our chapel that we have always put off until later doing the most necessary things, for fear of

<sup>19</sup> Letter published in *Missions O.M.I.*, 1864, p. 37 ff.

<sup>20</sup> The Basotho language uses prefixes with sounds that do not always exist in European languages. Father Gérard wrote them in different ways since the spelling was not easy to determine. We will use the spelling which is preferred today in recent works in French, especially that of E. Lapointe, O.M.I., *Une expérience pastorale en Afrique australe*, Paris, 1985, and J.L. Richard, O.M.I., *L'expérience de la conversion chez les Basotho*, Rome, 1977. Thus, Lesotho is the country, Basotho: the inhabitants of Lesotho, Mosotho: an inhabitant of Lesotho, Sesotho: the language of the Basotho. We will also write: King Moshoeshoe (and not Mosheh), the Village of the Mother of Jesus for Motse-oa-'M'a-Jesu or Motsi-wa-Ma-Jesu (the Zulu pronunciation). We will keep the word Basutoland, as it was during the English protectorate, which Father Gérard more correctly wrote as Basutho Land at times, and is today Lesotho. We have also kept the word "congregation" which Father Gérard used in its English and Protestant sense to designate the faithful at the Mission, and we kept also the capital letters that he often used, for example, for Mission, Mass, Father and Very Reverend Father, Superior General, etc.

delaying the time of the Mission's opening. Thus, it is scarcely a month that we have made a kind of bed for ourselves to sleep on; there also, we were forced to do it because the Bishop started to have very sharp pains from rheumatism that he attributed to our custom of sleeping on the ground. It is only one month since we have a table on which to eat our meals. We have only one chair and it was made to receive King Moshoeshoe.

We left everything in order to hasten the opening of the Mission and it was only on the day before the vigil of that day itself that I escaped into the rocks of our mountain to be able to recollect myself before the good Lord and consider the way I would address, in a language that I had not yet learnt very well, the so new and imposing audience that I would have.

Today, we can take a little respite, and with the greatest happiness I am profiting from this leisure to express to you all the sentiments of respect, attachment, and filial love that have always animated my heart in your regard. The day on which I am writing these lines is too near to that of tomorrow for me not to anticipate in telling you of the happiness that we will have in celebrating the feast of our good and Immaculate Mother and Patroness, in being close to you even though distant some several thousand leagues, with all our dear Fathers and Brothers of every country, if not *ex corpore*, at least *ex corde et spiritu*. How many thoughts and desires now come to mind here! Glory, honor, and thanksgiving to the Lord who has given us such a beautiful, pure and tender Mother, and who has called us to the happiness of forming an elite band of Mary's children!

I come now to our Mission, very reverend Father, and I want to give you all the information which may bring you satisfaction. Now that we are starting to understand the Basotho people, to speak their language, we will be better able to appreciate their dispositions.

Last November 1st was the day designated for the Mission's opening. The delay we experienced was due to the small number of our workers and to a trip that Brother

Bernard made to meet Brother Terpent coming here from Natal. The Basothos had been long awaiting this day when they were to see magnificent things and witness the manner in which the Romans<sup>21</sup> or Catholics honor God. In truth, people had told them so many things about Romans dancing at the altar, adoring a stone, copper, wood, getting rich on the shillings given to obtain the remission of sins, etc., that many were impatiently waiting to see all that with their own eyes. The King especially, a man of great judgment, had told us several times that we should invite him to the opening ceremonies of our religious exercises, and that he would come himself and speak favorably about us to his people.

As soon as the King learned of the designated day, he sent orders everywhere so that people would be prepared to come. This course of action was not at all approved by the group of Protestant ministers. They vetoed the King's invitation, but he took no note of it, as he himself told us before the whole assembly. However, the rare Basothos christianized by these ministers did not dare to confront their wrath. The King's brother, a staunch supporter of the sect, was dismayed by the prohibition. He did not come on Sunday, but he visited the Mission on Monday.

The King's presence was a great encouragement for us. We were delighted to see the most celebrated chief in this part of Africa show himself so favorable to the missionaries of Jesus Christ's true Church. Moshoeshoe arrived about nine o'clock in the morning, even though the mountain where he lives is two and a half leagues by horseback from our Mission. Please note that he is already up in years; he is at least sixty years old. He was joined by several of his sons and a great number of horsemen all dressed in European garb. We decorated the chapel as best we could with our limited resources. The sanctuary was covered with a red backdrop; the altar had a crucifix and candles sent from France; besides that, in the

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<sup>21</sup> *Baromans* in *Missions O.M.I.*; it is the English word Romans with the Sesotho prefix Ba.



middle was a beautiful statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary in bronze; it is a present from good Father Barret. At the back of the sanctuary could be seen a beautiful painting of Our Lord crowned with thorns, also done by this excellent Father's skillful hands.

A solemn Mass was celebrated by the Bishop, accompanied by the harmonium played by Brother Terpent. We sang two hymns in Sesotho.

I do not have to tell you how much the Basotho were amazed to see such beautiful things. The mitre and crosier affected them the most. I explained to them as best I could that these were signs of the authority and responsibility that Bishops have to pasture the flock of Jesus Christ in the fields of truth; and that under the direction of the only supreme Shepherd to whom the Lord confided his flock. At communion time, we had the sermon for the opening of the first Catholic Mission among the Basotho. It was Pentecost day for these poor people; it was the first time that they received the law of Jesus Christ from those who had been sent by him. Yes, dearest Father, we opened this Mission in the name of the holy Catholic Church, in the name of our Holy Father the Pope, who had delegated us, and also in the name of our dear Congregation. We placed it under the protection of the Immaculate Conception.

That day I remembered with joy the words that our most reverend and beloved Father and Founder had written to me several months before his death. I firmly hope that, seeing the manner in which we have accomplished his desire, he will pray for us. He knew how deeply unyielding and obstinate the Africans are.

Thanks be to God, everything went rather well during the ceremony. After the sermon, the King also wished to give his own. He asked permission from the Bishop who granted it to him very graciously. He was allowed to come into the sanctuary where he could command the view of all his subjects. He spoke to them at length; among other things, he told them that today he had procured a treasure for them; that, if they

would search deeply, they would come to know which is the true religion, whether it was ours or that of the Protestant ministers; that one of the latter had tried to prevent him from coming to the Romans, but he insisted on seeing with his own eyes if what they had so often been told about them was true or not; that he was able to declare that he had never seen in the Protestant's temple anything which came near to what he saw here, especially the mitre and crosier. Then, addressing the more important chiefs by name, he recommended that they see that the church be always full; that they carefully refrain from doing the least harm to the Mission, because he would be there to punish the evildoers; that he invited all of them, men and women, to offer us their services when we would need them for the work. He recalled to their minds what I had said when commenting the words of Our Lord: *Whoever believes and is baptized, will be saved.*<sup>22</sup> He spoke pretty well in these terms, but he also said many other things that I did not fully understand, but which concerned to some extent the affairs of State.

At the end of the Mass, I asked the King if he would not want us to pray for him, that God would grant him many days. He gave me an approving sign, and we sang the *Domine salvum fac*.

When the Mass was ended, the people withdrew. Then, a new feast got under way for the Basotho. Those from the neighborhood came to offer goats to the King. Soon, we heard the cry of the poor animals as they were put to the knife. Fires were started all around. The Basotho go from one group to another until everything is eaten up. All that remained were the hides and horns. During the course of the day, the King was continually busy in receiving visits from his people in a small room which we had prepared for him. In the evening he wanted to see the chapel again and examine it more closely. His attention centred mainly on the Blessed Virgin's statue. I took it down from its throne and placed it before his eyes. He

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<sup>22</sup> Mk. 16, 16.

admired it and wanted to take it in his hands; I entrusted it to him for several moments. Oh! Let's hope that our dear, merciful Mother will have him experience some of her divine influence! When night had come, we had another short program for the Catholics present that day, seven in all. The King attended it as well.

On Monday, the Bishop wished, in his turn, to honor the King and his attendants. One of our oxen, the fattest of all, was the price of the banquet. The King was very moved by this politeness and he expressed his gratitude several times. We witnessed on that occasion his affection for his people. Like a father among his children, he himself handed out to the Basotho people the meat which had been prepared. The morning went very quickly. From every place they brought to him domestic animals that he had placed in various villages. They say that he counts them by the thousands.

After having shaken hands kindly and cordially with us, he asked Brother Terpent to strike up again the Regimental anthem which he liked very much and then he left us.

As he was leaving, his brother, whom he highly esteems, arrived. I have told you that he is Protestant. He is a good and sincere man. After having become acquainted with one of our zealous Catholics and some conversations that we have had with him, he has come to the point of saying that we are the true missionaries. He recognizes the untruth of the assertions that have been uttered in our regard. I had a long conference with him during which I refuted all that they had told him, and that in such a decisive manner that he exclaimed: Ah! Now, I see! The dogma of the Immaculate Conception especially, which they had presented to him as a doctrinal novelty and an addition to the Bible, was explained to him to be in perfect harmony with his own way of thinking; again, he was struck with amazement. I have always felt that he has some secret motive for remaining attached to the sect. He says it is in gratitude to those who had drawn him out of paganism ... In any case, let's hope and pray. When I told him the famous dictum *Quid prodest?* What good is it to a man, etc.? he did not know

what to reply ... he only muttered under his breath: some day ... I give you these little details to let you know something about this new people who are so different from the Zulus. We have not seen nor heard anything like it among these poor tribes who really deserve to be pitied.

On the Sundays after the Mission's opening there was not as numerous an attendance, you may be sure. Our nearest neighbors are not the most fervent. Besides, everyone is afraid lest their women become Christian and abandon them. A large number have forbidden their wives to come; they do not try to hide it, and they themselves hardly ever come to hear us. However, they do not despise us. When I go into their villages, they vie with one another as to who will offer me milk, bread or beer. This attitude makes us hope that they will come one day as bit by bit their prejudices and suspicions are wiped out. We even see that every Sunday the little number is growing. Some young people are showing excellent dispositions. A dozen of them come regularly from a village about two leagues away. They come on horseback, led by a very intelligent chief. He was baptized, but returned to paganism for he was not strong enough to bear the burden. His sterile religion could not give him the divine grace which it does not have.

It is certain that a good school of the kind spoken of in our Holy Constitutions would be very advantageous among the Basotho. King Moshoeshoe would share these views quite willingly and I believe that a great number of parents would send their children to college or to this school. There they would learn, along with Christian doctrine, different trades which would bring them the respect of their fellow countrymen. They have a taste for learning and dressing like the Europeans, but clothing is very expensive here. They must sell an ox in order to dress themselves from head to foot. I also believe it would be good to make as many stations as possible at the present time, for King Moshoeshoe is very favorable to the Catholic religion. But Moshoeshoe is a good sixty years old and who knows what will happen to us after his death?

I have learnt with great satisfaction that your Paternity was good enough to send us two Fathers, two Brothers and even some Sisters of the Holy Family. I am unable to find words to tell you all my gratitude. It is time to make an assault on the armed Fortress<sup>23</sup> which defends itself so stubbornly in this African land. By thus using extraordinary means to win the conversion of these tribes, we will have at least the satisfaction of having done all that was possible.

At the present time, these are the religious exercises at the Mission: attendance at Mass, where we sing hymns; then, an instruction, followed by a question period on what was preached. In the afternoon, catechism, followed by a hymn in honor of the Blessed Virgin. We have composed a hymn based on the Ave Maria. It makes me happy to think that our Basothos join all the earth's nations in proclaiming the holy Virgin blessed. May they also begin to say: Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us! To be sure, they still do not do it with their whole heart and soul, but it is a beginning; let's hope that the Blessed Virgin will teach them the rest.

You see, dear Father, what our hopes are, and the small, puny beginnings of our Mission. You also see the obstacles. As everywhere in Africa, it is polygamy, the diabolical system which is responsible for women being sold like animals. Here, this custom has yet an additional bad feature. The chiefs can give their wives to other men, but the children belong to them. If they are girls, they are sold in turn for about thirty cows. If they are boys, they become the chiefs' shepherds. They say that from the point of view of morality, the Basothos are more corrupt than the Zulus. That may be, but they certainly have many more good qualities than the latter; they are more frank, more sensitive to honor, more open to instruction and civilization.

A Sisters' convent will be a very great asset here. Besides the education that it will offer, it will be a place of

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<sup>23</sup> An allusion to Lk. 11, 21. The expression appears several times. Father Gérard uses it to indicate the demon's stronghold.

refuge and protection for women who would like to become Catholics. The African women, and especially the Basotho women, are more sensitive, do not like polygamy. If at present they want to be baptized, they will be chased out; and where could they go? Our place is impossible, but a convent will naturally offer them a hospitable roof ... That is why I beg Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin to give our Brothers and Sisters a favorable crossing. May they soon arrive with us in good health, full of courage and a religious spirit!

I must end my letter. The mail is going to leave and the Bishop wants me to prepare, without delay, a little book that will teach the Basothos how to read.

Bless our very dear fledgling Mission and pray very hard in your holy devotions for your unworthy, but nevertheless very obedient son.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

## 8 - [To Father J. Fabre, Superior General].<sup>24</sup>

*Adverse results obtained by the Protestants. Moshoeshoe's justification of devotion to Mary. Christmas spent with an Irish family. Religious indifference of many.*

Mother of Jesus Village, among the Basothos,  
February 4, 1864.

We are still at our beginnings, that is, we are still studying our people and searching for the best way to do some good for them. Since I have had the joy of writing to you, the Basothos have continued to go at their usual way. We can see it, a great fear of becoming Christians reigns among them: they dread the separation from their wives, for they are all polygamists. That says it all! That is the *armed Fortress*. Polygamy practiced not only from passion but from self-interest: it is the source of all their income and almost the only

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<sup>24</sup> Letter published in *Missions O.M.I.*, 1866, p. 20 ff.

trade in the country. Thus, on the part of the men, strong reservation to coming to the chapel; they would then have more remorse about it than they want to bear. Then, these same men hinder their wives, who would be more open to good influence, to come to our religious exercises. They say that at the beginning when the Protestant missionaries preached to the Basothos, there was a great rush and throng of conversions. Many of Moshoeshoe's wives left him to be baptized. The king did not oppose this at all. But soon after, these and others returned to their polygamists. Thus a great number of Basothos were baptized; but the ministers of error, unable to give the grace which provides strength and growth, grace which they do not have, these plants, due to the lack of heavenly rain, promptly dried up, so that there was an almost universal return to paganism. The king allowed some ten of his sons to be baptized. I know all of them who have gone back to the nation's customs; they all now have several wives; one of them has at least forty. Such are the results obtained by our separated brethren. They themselves have acknowledged them in the newspapers. Thus, our religion has lost some of its prestige in being transmitted by the medium of heresy. We tell ourselves at times that, humanly speaking, that it is very regrettable that the Catholics were not the first to penetrate this land. Of course, the Lord's designs are hidden from our eyes. Still it is a fact that the Basothos have acquired a certain repugnance to religion. But what shall we do then? We still live in hope. Yes, my very reverend Father, we have something in our heart which says to us: Hope! This the Blessed Virgin's Mission. From the beginning, our Immaculate Mother has visibly protected us and made the King always favorable to us. Moshoeshoe has not ceased to love and respect us. In some instances, he comes to the defense of our holy religion against the Protestants. He has too much good sense not to see that truth is on the side of the old religion that Jesus Christ himself has established.

Recently, his brother told me (I have already spoken to you about him): Two of us were discussing with Moshoeshoe

and said to him: It is the Romans who have deviated from the truth. But the King did not want to hear that: Chè! Chè! (Non! Non!), I am convinced that they have the truth. And as to *Mary*, he continued, why do you say that the Romans worship her statue? That's not true. See! Someone has written Jehovah's name on a paper. This name, it is not Jehovah himself, it is only his name; it represents him, but it isn't he. In the same way also the Romans say: This statue is the statue of *Mary*, but it is not her; they know it well. If they honor the statue, it is that they think of *Mary*, the mother of Jesus Christ.

I tell you, dearest Father, that the ministers continue to calumniate us in their sermons in a frightful manner.

Mary, our good Mother, also is included in these horrible blasphemies worthy of Luther and Calvin. But these serpents, crawling on the ground, will be able to do nothing more than vain attempts *to bite her heel*;<sup>25</sup> and it will always be said of Mary, Mother of God, that she has shattered all heresies. Every time I have an opportunity I am happy to defend the honor of our Immaculate Mother, and the Basothos, even the ones who have been perverted, cannot fail to recognize how proper it is to honor and pray to the Holy Mother of God, in whose womb Jesus Christ drew the blood which has redeemed us. I believe that one day or other Mary will show herself to be our mother, which she truly is.

At least the unbelievers are not ashamed to sing everywhere and all the time the hymn composed on the *Ave Maria*. It is to the tune of *United to the Angel chorus*. You can also guess, by this letter's date, that we have christened our Mission. Since people blaspheme against Mary so much, it is only right that her children endeavor to honor her all the more and repair the insults done to her. So, we have chosen the name of Motse-oa-'M'a-Jesu, which means, the village of the Mother of Jesus. The King, having been consulted, replied that it was a very beautiful name. Since you want to have all possible in-

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Gen. 3, 15.



formation about our activity, viewpoints, and hopes, allow me to add some details.

You know that on the King's mountain, there is a good Catholic family. The head of that family is an Irishman, very zealous in regard to his religion. He has done very much to defend us in the eyes of the Basotho Christians there in that place where a Protestant minister lives. These Basothos have already begun to respect the religion that has been so much maligned before them, and some of the main ones, among others the King's brother, are quite unsettled and don't know what to say or do.

On Christmas Day the Bishop spent the feast with that Irish family who received the sacraments. In the evening, after our prayer service, I went there also to give an instruction to the Basothos. The house was full, the principal members of the sect were there. After I had spoken at length, I gave them complete freedom to ask me questions. They profited by it very willingly and made great use of it. May the Blessed Virgin take up the cause of these poor lost people, whose situation is that much more critical because they believe that it suffices to call on God to be saved.

We are thinking of visiting in the near future a rather large village of *Barolongs*, part of a tribe which is living on Moshoeshoe's lands. It is said that they are good people, more inclined to religion than the Basothos. There is also a Catholic family there. This latter tribe is already partly civilized; they all live in a village where the Protestant missionary has not yet set foot among them.

Another source of hope is an institution for boys and possibly one for girls. I say possibly because girls are a wealth that the Basothos do not easily give up. We hope that the chiefs and the leaders will be flattered to send their sons to learn to read, write, and study the art of civilized living. The King understands our point of view well and we think he will back us up with his full authority. As soon as we have completed the most necessary buildings, we will start on those for the college.

*March 15, 1864* — We had torrential rains all last month; because of that, the mail did not arrive on time. It has just come now, and we have learnt of Father Vincens' death. O Lord, how dismayed we were by this news!

The Basotho's attendance at Sunday religious exercises has dropped off, due either to the harvest which they must protect against birds, or to the indifference or repugnance of the majority for the truths that we speak to them. There are several of them with better will but they are very few; they understand very well and are already advanced in instruction. They still have the most important step to take. I am soon going to speak about it specifically to them. Prudence is very necessary; the Basotho nearest to us are the most indisposed to the Mission. Ah! Very Reverend Father, we have placed the future of our work in the hands of Mary Immaculate. When will we finally have good news to tell you about our Basotho people!

You may be quite assured, Very Reverend Father, that we will give ourselves no rest till we have brought back the lost sheep which has never known its good master.

Oh! How sad is the sight of so many souls who go lost because they do not love Jesus Christ! Even when these poor [ ... ] have received so many of God's graces, they nevertheless have the frankness to say that they do not love him.

I learned that in the *Barolongs* tribe a son of the chief and the son of his first counselor asked a priest from Bloemfontein who was passing that way to become Catholic. On the trip that we made with the Bishop, we left a very good discussion catechism with a German Catholic who is living amid that tribe. We learned later that the chief's son began to translate it from English into his African language. We will soon know more about it. It is certain that prejudices will melt away little by little, light will come, and once our holy religion is well known it will be loved and accepted. But that is the good Lord's work, so we must be patient. This tribe of *Barolongs* is not subject to Moshoeshoe, it is independent. It has also two Protestant missionaries who do not agree very much among themselves.

That is about all that I can tell you of the present state of this Mission. Please bless it and recommend it to the prayers of all our brothers in Europe and elsewhere.

[J. Gérard, O.M.I.]

**9 - [To Bishop Allard, at Pietermaritzburg].<sup>26</sup>**

*The first Basothos admitted to the catechumenate.*

[Mother of Jesus Village], December 29, 1864.

Since your departure, the non-believers that we are evangelizing have not ceased to attend the exercises at the Mission in as great a number as before. Those who come regularly to our chapel come from a village which is more than a league distant; they come there singing the Mission's hymns all along the way. Having found some of them to be quite well disposed, I admitted them to the catechumenate on Christmas day itself. One of these catechumens has gotten some clothes for herself to come to the chapel; I have given some to a girl who seemed to me to have a great sense of modesty, something very rare among the Basothos. Her father, who is one of the chiefs and a son of the King, is no longer opposed to her becoming a Catholic Christian.

These catechumens, who come from such a distance for Sunday service, also come to the chapel one day during the week to follow a course of instruction to which the others are not admitted. Last Sunday, there was a great eagerness to genuflect before the altar on entering and leaving the chapel and even for taking holy water. That was caused by the example of those women who come to catechism. The Basothos have been asking me for a long time now when you will be coming back from Natal, because, they say, their hearts are already heavy. Thus, the good plans that you had conceived to see one

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<sup>26</sup> Excerpt published in *Missions O.M.I.*, 1867, 66-67. The writer in *Missions* misread the date of the letter. He wrote March 19, but, following the context, Father Gérard wrote after Christmas.

day this Mission flourish, always had, and now more than ever, a solid basis; experience shows that they come from God.

[J. Gérard, O.M.I.]

**10 - [To Father Joseph Fabre, Superior General].<sup>27</sup>**

*Hopes of some conversions. Some Basothos are preparing for baptism. The catechumenate. Father Hidien's arrival on Christmas 1864. Catechism in Sesotho.*

[Mother of Jesus Village], June, 1865.

The place from which I am writing you these lines is Moshoeshoe's royal palace. I have the honor to spend the night here with good Father Le Bihan whom the Bishop is sending to Natal on some important business. Even though I am in the capital, in the Athens of the Basothos, I can nevertheless say that I am here alone with you under the good Lord's gaze since he does not sleep but watches over us continually. The whole city is plunged in deep sleep. How it would please God if it were not at the same time seated in the shadow of the death of infidelity.

However, it seems that the Lord finally wishes to take away the shame which has for so long weighed down your Mission. Without speaking too much about success which is possibly still quite far away, we can speak of a little brightness on the horizon, even though which enables us to see more clearly the great battles which will take place in bringing success to God's work.

It will be a year next month, that an instruction on Saint Mary Magdalene, such a beautiful and encouraging model for sinners and unbelievers, brought two Basotho women to finally say the important: "If that is the way it is, what shall we

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<sup>27</sup> A letter published in *Missions O.M.I.*, 1867, p. 77-80. The writer in Missions says that this letter was written after the one of Bishop Allard of June 10th.

do?" After they had been tested by their parents, we received them into the catechumenate, on December 25, 1864, the same day that Father Hidien arrived here from Natal. The catechumenate, as we understand it here, is already a certain practice of the Christian religion, and a renunciation of evil practices: polygamy, circumcision, worship of false gods, etc. Before being admitted to the catechumenate, the Basothos make a promise to keep the Ten Commandments. We have received a few: eight in all. Others have asked for this favor but we are going to wait till the first baptism takes place: that will not be till the end of the war which has just broken out between the Basothos and the Boers.

These beginnings are very weak, but our catechumens have a good spirit: a great change has already taken place in them. They were the first to ask to make their confession, to be freed from the load of their sins which did not allow them any peace night or day.

Among these catechumens is a good, respectable matron, who puts all her joy into speaking with God: one day, she allowed herself to be lured away into a pagan custom by some nice-sounding words. Her older sons did not listen to her at all when it came to the circumcision of the youngest child in the family. In spite of her remonstrations, they made a great feast to which they invited the relatives and neighbors. That day the good woman came to prayer and catechism while they were playing and dancing in the village. However, after the ceremony, according to custom, they brought the circumcised child, fourteen years old, to receive a kiss from his mother. She gave in to the enticing words of the other relatives and gave her son this sign of affection. Immediately her conscience reproached her about it and remorse brought her to me in order to regain tranquility and peace of soul. She took a strong resolution and she directed that, from then on, this child's food would be prepared far away from her hut, so as to condemn as much as she could the participation that she had taken in a superstitious action.

This deed shows how much grace works strongly in these poor souls accustomed up to then to evil practices.

A child baptized in danger of death and a good woman regenerated before her last breath are the first fruits of the Balthos that we have sent to heaven. A thousand thanks to Mary Immaculate who helped us so visibly on the occasion of this poor unbeliever's baptism. By a very special grace, she always understood us perfectly and she made her confession with the most admirable dispositions.

These are a few flowers picked among the brambles and thorns which cover this sterile land.

I have just come down from the mountain, and I am finishing this letter, kneeling down resting on an old basket. But I cannot pass over in silence the conversation that I just had with the good Job, Moshoeshoe's brother. We had given him a catechism in Sesotho; it is a solid work, translated in part from Butler's English catechism. This man told me simply that he had never seen something so solid in his books, that he understood our teachings well, and that he could not endure his coreligionists attacking the *Romans* without having heard them. He added these words: "Truth must be on your side, for when ten men take a road and an eleventh takes another road that contradicts it, it must be the latter who is wrong." He was referring to Luther. I recommend this man to your good prayers.

# **11 - [To Father Justin Barret, in Natal].<sup>28</sup>**

*The Boers in front of Thaba Bosiu. The army's arrival in the Mother of Jesus Village. Father Gérard in the midst of the shelling.*

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<sup>28</sup> This letter was transcribed by Father Barret in his letter of December 19, 1865 to Father Fabre. Orig.: General Archives O.M.I.

Mother of Jesus Village, September 22, 1865.

Dear Father Barret,

Yesterday, Father Le Bihan arrived in very good health. What a welcome change his arrival brought to the daily preoccupations of this already long war. My dear Father, you have never heard cannon fire so often; it is a terrible expense in powder and shrapnel. For the last three or four weeks, the whole mountain has been encircled in such a way that one could accede to it only at night. The enemy destroyed all the houses of Thaba Bosiu (the black King's residence) and killed a great number of cattle which were grazing there and were meant to be food for the Africans. But there is not much damage; it is like an unconquerable fortress. Very few Basothos were injured by the cannon; they have gotten accustomed to it, and when they see the cannon fire, they know how to take precautions. Today, at last, I hear that the Boers have ceased to encircle the mountain and have come back to take their position opposite Thaba Bosiu. Where will that end, dear Father? We are tired of it since our Mission is almost interrupted.

Our poor catechumens are widely dispersed; for you are not unaware that the whole population has fled into mountain caves and the flocks are hidden in the Drakensberg mountains. We long only for the moment when we will be able to bring our catechumens to baptism. I recommend them to your prayers and to those of the pious souls whom you know in your flock.

I thank you sincerely for the attention that you have shown in my regard. But, really how could you speak to your congregation about it?

Yes, dear Father, that was undoubtedly a very evident sign of our good Immaculate Mother's protection. She rightly obtained this respite for me, for she saw me still so unworthy of the reward, even so little prepared, I might say. May she be forever praised for it and together with this favor may she also obtain for me that of making good use of the few days remaining to me.

Possibly you will be very pleased to know the details of this event. Here they are. No doubt you already know that, when we saw the Boers already camped before the Thaba Bosiu, we were very afraid that some fine day they might want to pay us a visit in our valley. So we considered it prudent to retire to a nearby forest and hide there a major part of our effects. Father Hidien, Brother Moran and I stood guard over the house and convent.

On August 10th, at about eight o'clock in the morning during our breakfast, we saw the army coming towards our place. Leaving everything aside, we ran to the chapel to the foot of the Blessed Virgin's altar; we recited the *Ave maris Stella*, then taking our breviaries and coats under our arms, we went to wait for the army. Soon an English gentleman set out at a gallop toward us. He was very polite and affable, reassuring us that they would do no harm to any of the missionaries' places or any of their property.

After a short time, the whole army started to move and come at full gallop. They stopped opposite the station, while some others went to burn the neighboring Basotho villages and to destroy the *crops*.<sup>29</sup> After having been reassured ourselves, our first thought certainly went to the Bishop and the entire community with His Lordship. I spoke of them to a General who told me to go and call all our people out of the forest. Several English gentlemen in the army offered to lend me a horse; I accepted that of Mister Whitehead whom I had known in Natal. His Lordship then came back with the whole community. The General then begged us to leave the forest quickly, because they could not protect us there amidst the Basothos. We then started to repack; but we could not finish in one day. So I stayed in the forest to guard the articles, staying in a *wagon*<sup>30</sup> whose cover was set up on the ground; I slept there also.

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<sup>29</sup> *Mabele* is sorghum.

<sup>30</sup> Wagon is a covered vehicle whose frame (fixed on an iron support) is referred to as a tent by the author.



That day the army divided: one part camped at ten minutes distance from the house, but the other part climbed the mountains and went to capture the Basothos' cattle. When they came back the following day with their plunder, they also wanted to drive out the cattle which were in the narrow valley, out of the forest where hundreds of Basothos had hidden themselves in the crevices of the rocks. The army thus dominated the valley and started to shoot from the mountaintop. They started with the valley's upper region, progressing continually to the lower part where our *wagon* stood at the valley's entrance.

I spent a long time walking near the *wagon*, trying to recite my breviary, but quite in vain: concern made me completely incapable. The army had not yet arrived opposite to me. At last, tired out, I went into the *wagon*; as a precaution, I placed a white flag on the end of a pole. Soon, the army arrived on the rocks above the valley where I was. The shooting started. I kept on hoping that they would respect the *wagon* at least — a vain hope. Several shells came whistling over the *wagon*. I was already somewhat afraid. What should I do? to get out of there would be to expose myself in the midst of the shells; there was no other means. God alone, was now my only hope and strength; Mary Immaculate, my good protectress. I recalled that many times murderous lead had struck a scapular or one of her medals!

However, so as not to neglect small human resources, I flattened myself on the ground (the wagon cover had been taken down and set up on the ground to serve as a house.) There was also a straw mattress there; I folded it in two and put my head under it. Now, everything was over; I now resigned myself to whatever God wished of me; but, I don't know why, I was no longer afraid. I had had time to get ready for the blow. Finally, the firing went on by squads whose commands I could clearly hear. How many shells brushed the *wagon* cover, and how many others came to bury themselves not very far away! Finally, however, three came through the *wagon* very near to me! Among others, one came to shatter

against Father Hidien's breviary, which was right at my feet. What brought on these repeated bursts of firing was that a Mosotho had fired on the Boers from near the *wagon*. So, they wanted to kill this daring fellow at all cost. However, all they did was to take some skin off of his shoulder. So, thanks to Mary Immaculate who undoubtedly turned the shells away from my person; [she] had been my shield. You can imagine in what anxiety the Bishop and the whole community was who heard all this noise without knowing what had become of me. The storm passed, as all things do, and peace and joy returned to my soul. Good Father Barthélemy came soon after, as well as good Mother Marie-Joseph and Sister Marie de Jésus, to find me, dead or alive. All together we thanked the good Lord for what he had just done through our good Mother's intercession.

A poor African had a leg shattered by a shell that day; another had his foot pierced. We took them into our house; good Father Hidien and Mother Marie-Joseph and Sister Marie de Jésus liberally provided them with the most devout and maternal care. The first one especially was in a wretched state, and more than one would have withdrawn in dismay; but a Sister of Hope, oh my, what courage! Oh, these poor unbelievers could not resist that: they had to give in to a language of such great charity. They believed that truly there was a God who alone could inspire so much courage. Our instructions penetrate very readily into such hearts, disposed and prepared beforehand by so many heroic actions.

They were converted and gave magnificent examples of patience and resignation. One was baptized by the Bishop in *articulo mortis*.

The other, prepared at greater length, was baptized on the feast of Saint Lawrence Justinian. He died in a very good state of mind, in the midst of his children and some Sisters who came to take part in the prayers for the agonizing. A few moments before his death, he said to us again: Pray, I am leaving; pray that God may receive me well! I had him kiss the miraculous medal several times; it was the very feast of

the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. He recommended his children to me as well as his body; we buried him with the honors of Christian burial.

We have also taken in two old women as well as an old man. Such are the treasures of our Mission. Another poor old woman I went to get from a forest where she was alone, abandoned, without any food. I was too late; she was scarcely alive. However, I picked her up, but was forced to leave her on the road, almost dead. I had just gotten back with two Sisters; she had no more strength to listen to anything about religion; that is the way she died.

There, dear Father Barret, are some details concerning this episode at our Mission; storms are always better than calm moments. O, I would very much like to cease being a sailor in quiet waters! It has been such a long time that we have been living in this tranquility. But, let's hope; better days will come to the poor African Mission.

## 12 - [To Father Joseph Fabre, Superior General].<sup>31</sup>

*The failure of the Boers' August 15, 1865 assault against Thaba Bosiu. Father Gérard in the midst of the shelling (second version). The woes of war.*

[Mother of Jesus Village,] November 6, 1865.

I have as yet told you nothing about the sad war that is going on between the Basotho tribe and the Free State, or the Boers. It broke out last June, and since that time the population in our regions has been in continual fear and several times has fled with its flocks into the neighboring forests. The

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<sup>31</sup> Letter published in *Missions O.M.I.*, 1867, p. 87 ff. According to the *Journal de la Mission de Roma* and the preceding letter, Father Gérard escaped death on August 11th.

Boers pillaged and burnt everything in their path: the Basothos did the same on the Free State lands. We fear a famine will result from this immense destruction.

In August, the Boers came to pitch camp in front of Thaba Bosiu (the mountain of the night) where Moshoeshoe resides. During entire weeks, they kept up a continual barrage against this impregnable rock. Since thousands of cattle and horses had been gathered there to keep them from the Boers, not one escaped: hunger, thirst, and the cannon destroyed everything. Moshoeshoe stayed firm, surrounded by the tribe's elite and rejected any surrender. The Boers attempted an assault several times, but always without success. On the day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary the most terrible assault began; on it would be determined the life or death of the King and his nation. It was an unfortunate day for the Boers: they lost one of their generals and several men; after a two-month siege, they withdrew discouraged. However, they carried off a great number of cattle and horses.

During the siege, the Basothos had sent a deputation to the Governor of the Cape Colony of Good Hope to ask for his protection; they declared themselves to be subjects of Great Britain. But since they have, in regard to this country, a debt of ten thousand head of cattle, they received the reply that they ought first of all to think about making that payment. Thus, this plan for union failed.

We do not yet know what the outcome of this war will be, but we hope some good for our Mission from it: *omnia propter electos*. [2 Tim. 2, 10] "Everything for the elect." Undoubtedly, the Basothos have great faults, practicing stealing and plunder; but they have not yet received the true light, they have not experienced at all the influence of the true religion: we must pray that God will preserve them in order to convert them.

I am not able to pass over in silence an occasion in which we received a special protection from the Immaculate Virgin, and you yourself, dearest Father, will give thanks to the Lord as we have done.

Several reasons made us consider it more prudent to leave the Mission for a time and hide ourselves, as the Basothos were doing, in a nearby forest, strewn with enormous rocks that make it impassable for an army. Three of us were designated to stay at the House, to guard the Mission's material goods, that the army would have had the right to pillage if they found the place deserted. It gave us a heartache to see the Bishop, the Brothers and Sisters forced to flee like that into the forest and hide themselves among the rocks.

One day, early in the morning, we heard the shout of some Basothos who were taking flight: "The Whites, the Whites!" Consequently, we went out and saw a detachment of Boers advancing toward our station. We hastened to run up the white flag and went to pay a visit to the Blessed Virgin Mary; this could have been a farewell visit. Then, we took our breviaries, traveling coats, and waited for whatever would happen. An officer soon arrived at full speed, followed by a black soldier. He was an English gentleman. He greeted us very politely, told us the reason for their visit and purpose of the war they were waging against Moshoeshoe; he reassured us about the fate of the Mission's personnel and goods. A few moments later, the whole detachment came up at a gallop, without any order or discipline: it was made up of English, Boers, Germans and Africans living in the dominion of the Free State. Naturally, the General asked the whereabouts of the Bishop and the Mission's other members. I attempted to apologize for the choice which prudence had suggested; we were afraid that the Mission would become a place of refuge and combat for the Basothos, which would certainly have compromised our neutrality, "Nevertheless," I told him, "if you wish, the Bishop, Fathers and Sisters will be here within an hour." He told me to go as quickly as possible to call them, because it would be dangerous for them to stay among the Basothos, whereas he promised his full protection at the Mission. Immediately, several of these men hastened to offer me a horse. I accepted one from an English gentleman whom I had

known in Natal, and I went at full gallop to advise the Bishop and those who were with him.

The army lost no time: it began to burn the neighboring villages which had been abandoned; the cannon rumbled, but not one Mosotho dared to show his face, everyone had fled. The detachment stopped at the entrance to the little valley where was situated the forest refuge where all our people had been taken from.

After the people had returned, we had to think about bringing back to the house the goods and the two wagons that we had hidden. We needed at least two days to do this work, since the wagons had been taken apart and hidden in the river. So, I stayed there to watch the luggage while part of it was being transported to the house. Unfortunately, the Boers thought that we could do this task in a day; they divided up into two groups: one went to camp a quarter of an hour from the Mission, the other continued its way to the mountains looking for the Basothos' cattle. The soldiers in the latter detachment made no important move against the forest where hundreds of Basothos were hidden: they were satisfied, that day, on our account, just to fire several rounds of shells. Nevertheless, good Father Hidien all but became a victim. Having been called to a sick person's side, he chose a spot a little further in the wood with a Mosotho, hiding as best he could behind the trees. It seems that several bullets fell nearby.

The next day there was to be a more serious attack. After having taken out three or four thousand head of cattle, the detachment coming back from the mountains started to fire on the upper part of the forest refuge in order to chase out the cattle and kill the Basothos hidden there. I was alone with the luggage, at the lower part of the woods. When I heard the lively gunfire that was going on in the upper part of the forest, I naturally thought that the Boers would follow its natural border and would not spare the lower part where I was. I had no one to go to for advice. However, one thing troubled especially the old man in me. I knew that duty called me there, and that I ought therefore to stay there. But, on the other hand, I

thought that the Boers would remember their promised assurance that they had given us the previous night. so, I tried to make my presence known to them; but, unfortunately, I did not have the cloth to make a peace flag. I was reduced to putting up a more-or-less white sack above the wagon's covering.

After that, not being able to do better, or rather not having any idea of doing otherwise, I went into the tent.

I soon heard the noise of the army coming closer, continuing to shoot rifle shots from the mountain where they were. It came just opposite the place where I was hidden, the shelling let me know very well, and besides, I could make out the orders given by the General. Already several shells were coming my way, I heard them whistling, — they increased in number. What should I do? I was trembling. But what! Is this truly real? I stretched myself out flat on the ground behind a straw mattress and not a real one. There, you can imagine my feelings, dear Father. Well, I prepared myself for death quite peacefully. I said: "O God, may your will be done. O good Mother, pray for me in time of danger; I know that many times murderous bullets came to nothing against a medal or a scapular. However, may God's will be done!" As I was entertaining these thoughts and preparing myself for the great crossing, the firing did not cease. A great number of shells just grazed the wagon cover, others fell *a few feet away from the tent*, struck down, so to say, by a higher power, since the distance from which the army was firing was very small; finally, three of these shells penetrated right through the canvas and passed very close to me; one of them came and hit Father Hidien's breviary and mercilessly tore it apart, which breviary was right at my feet!

The tempest passed on however, and I threw myself on my knees to thank the Lord for his evident protection. The army stopped shortly after at the house but it was not able to reassure the Bishop. They excused themselves for having fired with more than usual vigor at the place where the tent was be-

cause a Mosotho had let go with rifle fire from that area. When the army had left the Mission, good Father Barthélemy, Mother Marie-Joseph and Sister Marie de Jésus came running to me, not at all knowing in what state they would find me.

That is, very reverend Father, one of the episodes in the Boer War that concerns myself. The Bishop, who is always so solicitous for his sons, suffered greatly in that instance, considering the danger that I had faced. Also, his Excellency very readily allowed me to say eight Masses in honor of the Immaculate Conception and in thanksgiving. I must add that the tent under which I had enjoyed that special protection of Mary was from the wagon of the Sisters of the Holy Family. They had sanctified it with their prayers and sufferings during their trip from Natal to the Basothos and they had fortunately hung up medals in every corner, and these medals have stayed there ever since. So how could I have not been protected?

The war served us greatly in making us known to the whole country, for it had brought into our district a large number of Basothos who were fleeing before their enemies. Roma, the name they give to the Mission, is known all over, and the *Romans*, the name they give to the Priests, are known as well. We had the opportunity to exercise charity and hospitality, always a very persuasive language among nonbelievers. Allow me to cite you several examples of that: they bring out at the same time the horrors of war and the inscrutable mysteries of God's justice and mercy.

First of all, we took in two old infirm women who could not escape with their relatives. I found another, eighty years old, almost dead of starvation and eaten up by vermin; since she was blind, she could not kill them. They had left her in a dark wood, humid and remote, at the foot of a waterfall, from which she drew a little water with an old straw hat, groping her way around. That was all she had to eat, except for a few spoonful of soup that some children brought her from time to time when they came to visit her.

Unfortunately, I arrived too late; I was not able to restore her enough to life and strength to seriously concern myself



with her eternal welfare. She had only enough consciousness to ask in a very weak voice for a little water. What a terrible sight! She was wrapped up in all sorts of animal hides, that of dogs, cats, calves, etc., etc. But how can I describe all the vermin that covered those rags, and how carry the poor woman with all that baggage? I took all those filthy things off her and dressed her up again suitably; then, I took her on my shoulders, hoping to save her soul ... Now and then, I asked the children if I were not carrying a corpse. Alas! I was far from the Mission! I told myself that she would never make it there, nor I either. Coming out of the woods, I found a cave and left her there, unaware of everything and especially of heavenly things. She was semi-alive in this state for two days and, to my great regret, died in unbelief. An old man had the same fate. But God's mercy showed itself in regard to two Basothos wounded by the Boers. For a month they were given first aid by the Sisters; the completely maternal and disinterested care they received from them did not fail to open their eyes and they died with the grace of baptism. We also baptized several children, two of whom have gone to heaven, thus increasing the number of the Mission's protectors.

Here is the timetable for our religious exercises. On Sunday morning we have Mass and an instruction for the neophytes. We recite the Rosary, pray and sing hymns. I must say, in praise of these dear children, that they have to walk for an hour or two. Sometimes, they come on Saturday and sleep at the Mission. I am very pleased with their attitude, brotherly oneness and irreproachable conduct. May the good Lord keep them in his holy grace. They will receive confirmation at Christmas.

Towards eleven o'clock we have the common service: we sing, pray, give an instruction, and, after that, we treat some questions in the form of catechism.

After dinner we have another common exercise, usually an exhortation to virtue or conversion. During it we often and happily speak of the Blessed Virgin, our Mother and Refuge of poor unbelievers.

Daily we have one exercise which will bear a great deal of fruit. That is morning prayer followed by an explanation of catechism for the school children or the other nonbelievers at the house. We close this exercise by singing another hymn.

My dearest Father, I have told you the best part, even though I told it poorly. There remains only to tell you about the Sisters of the Holy Family. I summarize everything in a word: they are as edifying as anyone could wish. The rapport set up between the two communities is definitely that which you yourself would have established, if we were fortunate enough to have you present with us. As for myself, I admire all the measures taken by our venerable Superior and Bishop, he whom our beloved Father and Founder chose and made his *alter ego* for the Natal Mission; for that is how one of his letters addressed to Bishop Allard from Ajaccio puts it.

I commend myself as well as our Mission to the Congregation's prayers, casting myself at your feet which I kiss in spirit. I am very happy to declare myself your most devoted son in Jesus and Mary Immaculate.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

### 13 - [To Father Tempier, in Paris].<sup>32</sup>

*Two baptismal celebrations. The King's niece baptized in his presence. Roma, urbs alma among the Basothos.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

[Start of 1866].

Reverend and dear Father,

Six months ago, I had the pleasure of sending you a short letter which reflected deeply the unfortunate situation in which we had been placed by the war. It was [ ... ] rather to prepare you for another. These days, even though we are not

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<sup>32</sup> Draft of a letter; Postulation Archives, Document Gérard I-2, notebook C, p. 57-58.

in immediate danger from the enemy, nevertheless, there are dark clouds on the horizon foretelling a new storm. I am speaking of the political state of this country. I am making use of this little respite to speak to your paternity for a few [moments] about this Mission that is so dear to your heart, for which you have prayed and wept so much along with our very reverend Superior General and Founder. It was only right that [ ... ] you who had been present at the Congregation's cradle, should also be present at the cradle of a Mission and a newborn Christianity, a work that the good Lord desired to bring about through the ministry of this same Congregation, our mother.

Herewith, I am sending to our beloved Father Superior [General] a detailed account of our first baptismal celebration among the Basothos.<sup>33</sup> This account should have been in his hands by the month of January, but the war hindered us from sending it to him, for we were unable to find a safe way to do so.

Today, Father, I will tell you about our second celebration of baptism which took place on Epiphany, a day forever unforgettable, which was a true feast of the Kings for our Basutoland.<sup>34</sup>

On that day our good Saviour wished to manifest himself to this nation in the person of several [of its members] who received baptism. Among these fortunate ones is a very important personage here, the eldest daughter of Moshoeshoe's eldest brother, consequently, *ex domo Caesaris*. But what we admired most in her was especially her attitude. How powerful grace can be! Who would have recognized her that beautiful day! Before, she was an outstanding woman with copper bracelets covering her legs and arms. She very generously gave up and loathed all that satanic pomp on the day that she came to ask for the catechumenate. One of her daughters had

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<sup>33</sup> The feast was on October 8, 1865. We have not found this account.

<sup>34</sup> January 6, 1866.

already preceded her into religion and another one came with her today to holy baptism.

The day was one of the finest; the King, one of his brothers and many of his sons were present. We made a most magnificent procession. How your heart would have rejoiced, if you had been able to cast a glance at this procession as it went by. The cross led the procession, carried by Father Le Bihan, accompanied or followed by his school; the little boys with their red turbans, two were dressed in surplice and looked very fine. After that came several catechumens, then the neophytes. Then came the convent's banner carried by the daughters of the Queen whom I have already mentioned. Next came the catechumens and the school of young girls, dressed in white and pink; after that were the Sisters. The King, His Lordship and the clergy completed the procession.

The King, due to his old age, was not able to see the ceremonies very well from his throne; we brought him into the sanctuary next to His Lordship and he did not idle away his time. He was continually watching all the ceremonies: he was very pleased with this attention. Everything went very well. What a beautiful day, the day of baptism granted to converted pagans! How well one feels in that the work of the good Lord.

The next day was equally beautiful, that of confirmation conferred on the neophytes. Oh, they too are the first fruits of Christianity, the first apostles of their country, the nucleus of the African Church.

They are very good children, we have nothing to reproach them, and we can say to them: *You were once darkness, now you are light*. Their distinctive mark is the cross and the medal that they wear around their neck and the rosary which they also wear hanging on their chest. They recite it very often, whether coming to the Mission or in the fields.

When they come to the Mission or leave it, they always go to greet the good Lord, to wish him good day. They also have a great respect and affection for all of us; they only refer to us with the sweet name of Father, and, among themselves,

when they point out the Mission, they say: *at our place, at their Mother's place*, that is, she who is the most tender of all mothers, the Blessed Virgin.

You see how well your prayers and your sighs and those of our Founder have been heard. This Mission will continue to progress, I hope, with God's grace. *Roma* is the *urbs alma* among the Basothos. The King sends all of his children there to be cured. Recently one of his sons, from the third house, was coming here hoping for health, when death took him on the road. Good Father Hidien has become a doctor in spite of himself, even in the royal city; that gives him the opportunity to baptize children in danger of death.

The boys' school is developing little by little: the one for the girls is already going well, they number twenty little girls.

[J. Gérard, O.M.I.]

#### 14 - [To Father Justin Barret, in Natal].<sup>35</sup>

*Bishop Allard's fall from his horse.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Mother of Jesus Village, July 28, 1868.

Very dear Father Barret,

His Lordship, may the Divine Will be done, had a very unfortunate accident, which has plunged all of us into great distress. We were escorting Moshoeshoe, who had come to visit us, when His Lordship's horse tripped and fell to the ground with the Bishop. His whole left side was bruised, but it is especially his upper abdomen which took all the blow. The Bishop did not leave the saddle, and consequently, the horse fell on him with all his weight, but by a wonderful act of Providence, the horse did not get up from his fall until we had extricated His Lordship from the stirrups and saddle. But he

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<sup>35</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives; a similar letter was sent to Father Martinet on July 28, 1868.

was in a very deplorable state. He was not able to stand or speak. After His Lordship had regained consciousness, we transported him to the Mission which was still close by; finally, dear Father, I cannot tell you how tears flowed from our eyes! Father Hidien went to Korokoro, to the police camp where they say there is a doctor. You understand that the entire wound is to the chest. His Lordship is still not able to move the whole upper part of his body.

The Bishop tells me to inform you that he received your letter that is dated June 18th; he permits you to make a skull-cap for yourself. He bids you to take great care of the Sisters and the entire colony coming in, even going to get them with the *wagon*; that will not be possible before December, due to the inclement season. His Lordship will send you a reply in a future mailing. He says that the mail is safe from here as far as Grahamstown; now, see if it is safe from that city to Natal. It is up to you to judge. I am in a great hurry, dear Father; so, accept the expression of my affectionate and fraternal sentiments.

Give my regards to all the members of the Mission, our dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus and Mary. Let us pray and have others pray for the recovery of His Lordship.

I am your most devoted brother in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Immaculate.

Joseph Gérard, O.M.I.

**15 - [To Bishop Allard, in Europe].<sup>36</sup>**

*The death of King Moshoeshoe. General retreat to prepare for Easter. Collection for the Pope.*

[Mother of Jesus Village,] April 20, 1870

... When Moshoeshoe saw that his strength was noticeably diminishing, he asked us as a favor not to leave him entirely alone, but to come often to see him. We didn't need such an invitation to urge us to fulfill this charitable duty. Since that time we have visited him twice a week. Even though our Mission is three leagues away, we went there, in good weather and bad, day or night. Several times we were scarcely able to enter his room, we had to start a fight near his bed, that is, argue with the Protestants who would have liked to bar the way to us. Moshoeshoe always received us well and showed great respect for us. He scolded those who wanted to prevent us from entering, he was upset by it. During one of our visits, Moshoeshoe appeared to be touched by what I was saying. Finding myself at his bedside, I spoke to him very urgently of his salvation; he listened to me very attentively. In the meantime, one of his sons came in and wanted to speak to him about some temporal matters. The King replied: what you speak to me about is not very important; but, what I have just heard from the missionary truly merits our attention. But this flicker of grace was blown out by the efforts of the Protestants, who continued to pester him day and night. Moshoeshoe did not have the strength to send them away, and he hoped as all sick people do, that his health would return. In the end, I was able to obtain from him only vague promises. The Protestants who had full access to his presence would have dearly wanted to inscribe him in their sect; they pressed him to make up his mind, but he told them clearly that he did not want to do so.

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<sup>36</sup> Manuscript copy in Bishop Allard's letter of October 25, 1870 to Father Fabre, Superior General, in Liverpool, p. 32-34, 37-39; A.G.R. Excerpts published in the *Annales de la Propagation de la foi*, 1871; p. 220 ff; 223 ff.

This drama finally had to have its conclusion. Alas, too often, as one lives, so one dies; that is what happened to this King. Moshoeshoe died a pagan. You will be grieved by that, Bishop, for you loved him so much and prayed for him so much. On March eleventh, his soul appeared before his Judge. I learned of this as I was on my way there again. I felt one of the deepest sorrows ever in my life. What a painful day was that of his burial, where, out of respect, I had to be present with several neophytes, though we stood apart. The Protestant ministers presided at the ceremony. These gentlemen did their best to make the Basothos believe that Moshoeshoe had died a Protestant; but they were not able to persuade the people. Everyone here knows that he died a pagan. We did not want to have any part in those dishonest and hypocritical praises, by which they disguised the truth and made Moshoeshoe into a believer; and when the King's oldest son came to ask me to say a few words over the tomb, I declined the invitation. There, that is enough about this overly sad chapter.

To worthily celebrate the feast of Easter, this year, I had the idea of giving a general retreat. We had four adults for baptism, and twenty one neophytes to prepare for first communion six of whom were men. All the others also had to fulfill their Easter Duty. The retreat started on Tuesday of Holy Week. Our neophytes had complete liberty to confess to Fathers who are not assigned to the spiritual care of the Mission. Everything went very well; fervor at the exercises was all that I could have wished for! Oh! What a holy night that was between Holy Thursday and Good Friday. All night long, the Church remained filled with these poor neophytes. How we felt that Jesus was there! Very often their hearts were so moved that they shed tears. Our joy was complete on the holy day of Easter. Men and women came to the church in procession; the women left the Sisters' place singing hymns. The men came from the college in an orderly way. We had lent them beautiful clothes. Their bearing was noble and pious. One would have to hear their male voices on such a solemn event. Happiness showed on their radiant and beaming fore-



headss. No one, they said, had ever seen anything like it, so breathtaking. The day went by very quickly. The procession coming out of the church was just as magnificent, but with greater numbers. The Sisters' yard was not able to hold everyone. We were forever thinking about your Lordship. I often mentioned you to them as being the author of their happiness.

The following day was another celebration for the congregation. Another moving ceremony was to take place: the blessing of four marriages contracted in paganism. A short similar sermon was preached to them; then we blessed the rings according to the formula in the ritual. We made them renew their promises of fidelity in marriage; at the end there was the giving of the wedding ring. After the religious ceremony, a banquet was held for those newly blest. These days of celebration passed rapidly and we reluctantly said goodbye to each other.

... All our neophytes and catechumens were pleased to contribute to this collection,<sup>37</sup> even the little children of four or five years of age. Most of the women gave their bracelets of every kind which they used as ornaments when they were pagan, and which they wore around their necks, arms, wrists and legs. It is a rather interesting collection. If we had the chance to send it to Europe, people would see what things constitute the vanity of our African women. These hundreds of bands which seem ridiculous to us have their importance here. For rounding out a woman's wardrobe it would cost a man a good eighty francs. All these material objects donated by our neophytes were evaluated to make up the sum which we presented to the Sovereign Pontiff. That was the main pur-

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<sup>37</sup> Bishop Allard responds this excerpt with the words: "The eagerness shown by our neophytes to support Pius IX is a fact that merits recognition here. It shows their satisfaction at being Catholic, and their love for the Church and its Head. It must also be said that this collection was not imposed on them. We simply gave them some idea of it as they had no concept of such a thing. We asked if they were favorable and their hearts responded with filial piety..." There is no date to this excerpt; it is possibly part of another letter.

pose of the collection. It is copper or iron instead of gold as the Indians give, but I believe that no one could give it with a better heart. Several gave money adding up to 22.50 francs.

Our school boys also distinguished themselves in this collection. The girls, guided by the Sisters, gave 38.75 francs, the proceeds they had earned with their sewing. One would have had to see the joy they felt at the news of the collection. To make up for the poverty of their gifts, they promised to be very well-behaved, to pray fervently for the Holy Father, and on the part of the older ones, to offer their communion for his intention.

## 16 - To Bishop Allard, Archbishop of Taron, in Rome.<sup>38</sup>

*The reception of Bishop Jolivet, Bishop Allard's successor. Baptisms. Plan for a Mission in the Transvaal. Brother Bernard, a holy religious and the Mission's support.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Mother of Jesus Village, August 2, 1875.

Your Lordship and dear Father, pardon me first of all for not having replied sooner to your good letter of May 12. I thank you for it as well as for the lively interest that Your Lordship always has in this Mission. Since you are its founder, you continue to be its protector and intercessor. It is a great joy for me to remember that and a source of hope. That is why I always consider it a duty to inform you both of our joys and sorrows, our successes and our failures. First of all, I must tell you how kind the good Lord has been to us in the choice he made of Bishop Jolivet as your successor. The good Bishop quickly won our complete affection, respect and trust. May the good Lord keep him with us for many years. You could not have a more worthy and capable successor. Together with us, thank the good Lord for it.

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<sup>38</sup> Orig.: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives.

His Lordship is here with us since July 7. I had the privilege of going to get him at Bloemfontein with your little old wagon. But Father Bompert took him in his two-horse carriage and your servant galloped behind their buggy which ate up the miles. It was the first time that I have seen Bloemfontein and the Free State in 11 years. I remembered this long road and wide open spaces that we travelled through together, bodies of water where we went to beg the good Lord for a few fish for our dinner, etc. Today, Bloemfontein has grown enormously. The children for catechism are between 30 and 40. It is a very respectable congregation.

The convent has been planned and started, and should be finished for July 1st next year. It will cost a good 4 thousand pounds, only the masonry and the roofing. It will be a very fitting monument to enhance the honor of our holy religion in this very Protestant city where there are so many heretical churches and schools.

His Lordship's reception in Basutoland was full of respect and love on the part of our dear neophytes. A cavalcade of Catholic and pagan Basothos, among whom were some of Moshoeshoe's sons, escorted him from St. Michael's to the Mother of Jesus village. A procession of all the other neophytes left the Mother of Jesus village and went to meet the Bishop with banners, torches etc. They met each other on the open prairie near Motoko, under a triumphal arch. Then they came towards the Mother of Jesus village singing hymns and to the sound of many gunshots. The civilities were performed at the chapel door, under the triumphal arches which formed a passage leading to the chapel. That was on Friday. On the following Sunday the reception ceremony took place, for which a very fat, black ox paid the price. Since that day we have had one feast after another. On the feast of the Holy Redeemer the Bishop gave first communion to 15 children from our schools.

On the feast of St. James we had the great solemn baptism of adults. There were 49 adults, 20 men or boys, and 10 women or girls. In the evening we had the baptism of 7 little children. What a beautiful day, dear Father. There was an im-

mense crowd of pagans gathered for that celebration; there were hundreds of pots of beer, hundreds of loaves of bread, and about a dozen goats. Measure the delight, joy, and spirit.

The ceremony took place in a building that we set up to replace the chapel as we await the building of the new church. This building, still incomplete, is 90 feet long and 25 feet wide. Thus, this whole crowd could be inside and the ceremonies were performed with solemnity. Four priests divided the chosen catechumens up among themselves.

It was like two magnificent crowns; in each there were two priests performing exorcisms. The Bishop who was on an elevated throne at the back of the building started the baptismal ceremonies at the last "*quo nomine vocaris ...*" Then, it was very beautiful and touching to see each catechumen, led by his godfather and godmother, go and kneel before the Bishop to receive holy baptism from him,

It was long, but highly pleasing. You could have spent a whole day contemplating this holy coming and going of the blessed passing before you, innocent souls, as pure as angels, in the peace of prayer! How a priest's soul is sweetly caught up in contemplating God's mercy and the admirable paths by which he sees that the good Lord has drawn poor pagans from evil. You know, Lordship and dear Father, the excellent effects that the sacred ceremonies of baptism produce in our souls. Just think then how happy we all were. Our holy Bishop was so pleased that he deigned to mention it to me several times during that holy day. God willing, in several days he will have the further joy of making 2 good old men and a good old woman children of God; all three of them are waiting only for holy baptism in order to go to the good Lord. We will add 4 other adults to them, all people from St. Joseph's. The ceremony will take place there and the Bishop will be better able to see how important it is to place a resident priest there.

Finally, your Lordship will be likewise happy to learn that Bishop Jolivet has decided to found another Mission among the pagans, and that among the distant tribes of the

Transvaal or tribes which are beyond that. Only three priests would remain in Basutoland. Two others will be sent in 3 or 4 months in search of an appropriate tribe, one that is disposed to receive the Good News. Pray for them and this new foundation. Who will be these pioneers of Holy Church among these distant tribes? It is still the good Lord's secret!

What a vast field for the zeal of priestly souls. In this diocese at least a thousand native tribes are still seated in the shadow of death. As for those good women who were always so faithful and devoted to you, they continue on in their good attitude. Good, fervent Christians, they are very grateful for the lively interest that you show in them. They request that you never stop praying for them, so that they may until death, keep themselves from the world's corruption. That is their entire wish. They send their very respectful regards to Your Lordship.

As for myself, Your Lordship, I have been very busy up to now. I am on four roads at once and rarely do I taste the delights of my cell. But the good Lord is my witness that it is with regret and out of duty. Woe to me if the proverb proves to be true, namely a rolling stone gathers no moss. Good Brother Bernard is always the same holy religious, the support of the Mission. He also recommends himself to your good remembrance. He is always very grateful for what you have done for him.

I end this letter placing myself at your feet which I kiss most respectfully and recommending myself to your good prayers and holy pilgrimages.

Always yours, your Lordship and dear Father, in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Jh. Gérard, O.M.I.

N.B. The number of baptisms last December was 425, today it is 488.

*[Note added in the margin on the first page of the original]:*

I would be glad to learn that your Lordship had received

all the items you asked for and which I sent in April, in the care of Reverend Father Sabon.

*[Note in the margin of the last page of the original]:*

Bishop Jolivet will not leave here before the month's end; he will go to Bloemfontein to see the work, etc. and then will come back to us. He sends you his regards.

### **17 - To Father Aimé Martinet, Assistant General.<sup>39</sup>**

*Mission personnel and work of each. The two schools, ministry, difficulties, consolations.*

Mother of Jesus Village, September 10, 1875.

Reverend and dear Father,

First of all, pardon my delay in sending you the present report on our Mission. Instead of trying to justify myself, which might not be impossible, I prefer to tell you that I am happy to be able to carry out today this duty toward the Congregation, and to do so through the intermediary of a Priest as zealous as you are in the interests of our dear African country. Our Mission's personnel includes Fathers Barthélemy, Deltour, Monginoux and your servant; Brothers Bernard, Poirier and Tuite.

Reverend Father Barthélemy, who came back to his beloved children in Basutoland last May, is improving himself in Sesotho which he has not forgotten over a six year absence. He is visiting the pagan villages in our valley, teaches catechism every week and gives an instruction in our poor church every two weeks. This state of affairs must continue until the Bishop makes other arrangements which he has led us to believe are probable. The same Father Barthélemy is also keeping busy in translating the most instructive and edifying passages of Bible History into Sesotho.

Father Deltour has been, since your passage until the present, our local procurator, director of the schools and mis-

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<sup>39</sup> Letter published in *Missions O.M.I.*, 1875, p. 493-500.

sionary for St. Michael's. The Bishop has just assigned him to St. Joseph's Mission at Korokoro, where he will soon go and take up residence. Saint Joseph's has made great progress since the first beginnings which you witnessed; it is now a very fine Mission; but especially, it promises wonderful things to come. Within a radius of about a league around the chapel, which you saw being built, live several thousand pagans still to be conquered for the faith. Several have already been converted and their chief is well disposed in our favor, for his mother, wife and children are all Catholics.

Reverend Father Monginoux providentially came to us in the month of November 1874. After two or three months of study, he overcame all the difficulties of the Sesotho language and began to be of great service, as much at the boys' school at the Mother of Jesus Village as at St. Michael's Mission in Father Deltour's absence. He has also given a completely new look to our poor churches of St. Michael, St. Joseph and the convent chapel, decorating them with wall paintings. At present, Father Monginoux is assigned especially to St. Michael's Mission; he goes there three times a week to spend the day. In between he gives religious instruction to the European children admitted to our schools.

Father Gérard, the one writing you these lines, is still in charge of the Mother of Jesus Village. Since he now has only the general supervision of the Missions of St. Joseph and Saint Michael, he will have more time to devote to useful translations and to go looking for the most reluctant among the pagans whom grace has touched, and that within the neighborhood of our central Mission.

Good Brother Bernard has been, more than ever during the time that he has been alone, the Mission's factotum. Since we have received two new Brothers, the Bishop has assigned him to teach in the boys' school, and no one may ask him to do anything else. He excels in this work; he has Brother Tuite to help him as the English teacher. They rival each other in zeal and live in perfect harmony.

The excellent Brother Poirier, who arrived last May, has already rendered us invaluable services. A tireless worker, he replaces Brother Bernard in field work and care of the flocks! On Sundays, he goes to St. Michael's, to teach Christian and pagan men who want to learn how to read, write or sing. He also gives two singing classes per week in our school in the Mother of Jesus Village.

That, dear Father, is our total personnel, with each one's responsibilities. Now, a few words about our works.

There are ninety boarding students in the two schools in the Mother of Jesus Village and about thirty in the two other Missions of Saint Michael and Saint Joseph. In these schools the new generation is being formed in the principles of Christian life through the most assiduous care of religious men and women devoted respectively to each of them. Our poor children in general profit well from the graces offered to them, even though they have their full share of fallen humanity's vices and are, for example, strongly inclined to lying, stealing, and foul language. Down deep, they have a good character and accept correction with docility.

During Bishop Jolivet's stay here we had the *solemn presentation of awards*, presided over by His Lordship. All the authorities and important people of the tribe had been invited by a letter-program in Sesotho run off at our press. Unfortunately snow held back several of these notables and to some degree upset our celebration. Masupha, Moshoeshoe's third son, whom we went together to see at Thaba Bosiu, if you remember, responded to our invitation, as well as did the chief of Korokoro and several others. The boys played *Joseph, sold by his brothers*, and the girls played *Esther*.

The new guidelines issued by the Bishop will certainly result in assuring the progress of our dear schools. Within a year, a good number of our pupils will be speaking English. I hope that we will no longer see the leading chiefs sending their eldest sons to Capetown (400 leagues), to learn English there in Protestant schools.



As for the work of the holy ministry, it is concentrated on the Mother of Jesus Village, at Saint Michael and Saint Joseph. From September 1st, 1874 until September 5, 1875, the day on which Bishop Jolivet left us to return to Pietermaritzburg, the place of his episcopal residence, we had, in three distinct solemn ceremonies, seventy three adult baptisms, and besides that, forty baptisms of children; two first communion ceremonies, one for children, another for adults: altogether, twenty five communicants; finally, a confirmation ceremony in which the sacrament was conferred on a hundred and nineteen people of every age.

Retreats of four or five days invariably precede these great solemnities. Two other retreats are preached annually to all the neophytes, one for men and one for women. These religious activities are carried out with a deep spirit of recollection, they always include an interruption of work and the temporal concerns that accompany it, for it is understood that those making the retreat come to spend these beautiful days here, close to God and the missionary. If there are among them any who have caused scandal since the last retreat, they make public reparation for their fault.

It was at the close of one of these retreats last year that our Christians wrote their letter to the Holy Father. I told them what you had done for them in the presence of his Holiness: how you placed at the feet of the venerable Pontiff the expression of their sentiments with the offering of their poverty. They are very grateful to you for these new kindnesses, for which they had been prepared by those that they had experienced here.

Our neophytes generally conduct themselves as good Christians, except for a small number, possible five or six, who do no honor to the Christian name. Several have gone to the diamond fields; they earned a great amount of money, but lost a great deal of their simplicity and openness there. In a month or two of work there, they earn enough to buy a rifle. Alas! what good will this hunting tool be for them, an item which might so easily become a weapon of war in their

hands? and above all, what compensation will there be for the spiritual good that they lost at the same time?

In this land of polygamy we have great difficulty to gain respect for the holiness of marriage, even among Christians at times. One of these went along with Bishop Allard to Port Natal seven years ago. During his absence, his wife, newly baptized, decided, in spite of all the remonstrations we were able to make, to go to her parents' place in the Cape Colony. On his return, the husband went to join her and stayed with her for another six years. But far from a priest the neophytes's faith became so weak that she left her husband to live with a stranger. The abandoned husband then came back to the Mission quite convinced that he was free to contract a new marriage and was very surprised to hear the contrary. Some of his relatives took his side, and all together they made a great outcry. Peace and quiet about this affair is scarcely beginning to dawn.

God has his chosen ones in every condition and he knows when he wants to inspire in the weaker sex and at the tenderest age the necessary energy to accomplish his plans. A young girl at the school had consented, at the insistence of her parents, to a marriage proposal. Her family had already received from the young man the number of cattle stipulated by custom; the beef for the nuptial banquet had already been killed and the guests had gathered together, when, all of a sudden and without advice from anyone, the girl, reacting against the current which had caught her up, declared that she took back her word and that she wanted to become a religious. There was great excitement, as you well imagine, and it was a cruel disappointment for the young man and the two families, especially for the one which had received the cattle, seeing itself obliged to return them and having to foot the cost for the marriage preparations. The girl remained steadfast; having had to resign herself and spend some time in her paternal home where by continued renewed efforts they tried to overcome her resolve, she remained adamant. Fortunately, she had a very good mother. The latter was reasonable, but the father

and parents of the suitor made a great uproar against me and the Sisters. In time, however, the storm subsided and calm returned. The child is, in truth, a fervent Christian; I believe that she is truly called to the religious state; now she is a postulant and everything gives hope that she will persevere. Our Lord Jesus Christ must love this people for he is beginning to choose his brides from their midst. For a few years already, several of the Sisters' more intelligent and wiser students have taken the habit of the Holy Family and have pronounced their first vows.

Up to now we have tolerated the custom according to which a young man who asks for a daughter in marriage must offer the latter's parents ten, fifteen, twenty head of cattle; according to the intrinsic or extrinsic merit of the person whose hand he seeks. But, this custom has many drawbacks and to cite just one of them: in many situations, the freedom of the girl of fifteen or sixteen years of age will be in great danger of being disregarded by greedy parents for whom her marriage is nothing but a question of profit. His Lordship, the Apostolic Vicar has not yet made a pronouncement but the question is being studied.

I leave it to a finer pen than mine to tell you about the beautiful ceremonies that we had on the occasion of Bishop Jolivet's visit. However, I wish to tell you myself how much good this first visit of our venerable Bishop has done among us.

May God be blessed a thousand times! I hope that this Mission will one day be the glory of our Congregation and the joy of our dear Father General, and consequently your own. Continue your goodness and counsel to us. Present my humble respects and affection, as a son, though unworthy, to our beloved Father General and his venerable Assistants.

I am, with the greatest respect and most sincere affection, the very humble and obedient son of your Reverence.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

**18 - [To His Lordship, the Archbishop of Taron, in Rome].<sup>40</sup>**

*Stay in Natal to print a Catholic translation of Saint Luke. Father Gérard to found Saint Monica's Mission. News from Durban and Pietermaritzburg.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Durban, April 10, 1876.

Your Lordship and dear Father,

Being at the moment in this sea port, my heart tells me more and more to write you some lines for consolation, and to give you some news of a Mission which you have loved so much and for which you have devoted yourself so much. Ah! yes, Your Lordship and very dear Father, who would not think of you? Who would not be grateful to you, when he sees how you so well prepared the beautiful buildings which do honor to our holy religion? For the most part, we owe them to you. How would we have built those beautiful schools (in Natal), if you had not known how to profit from the opportune moments to buy the properties, and had you not known how to economize. May God be praised! and thanks be to you!

I have come to Natal to have the holy Gospel according to Saint Luke printed, and a short universal history of the Church. This work takes a long time, as you know. I am impatiently waiting to return to Basutoland.

God willing, on my return we will found a new Mission at Molapo's place. This chief has given us a beautiful spot and a good water source. The Bishop is sending me there; and good Father Le Bihan will replace me at the Mother of Jesus Village. Father Deltour will reside at St. Joseph's and Father Monginoux will take care of St. Michael's, since he is staying at [the Mother of Jesus Village].

I think that they will give Father Barthélemy a little annex dependant on the Mission at Molapo's place. At the Mother of Jesus Village the Mission is going quite well; there

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<sup>40</sup> Orig.: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives.

are several of them who are weak, as you know. The rest continue to be very good. There are still about twenty catechumens there, among them the old Qobosheane, that old witch doctor from the cave at Thlo-o-Thle, and his wife. This time it is for good, he wants to be converted. We have started building a community house for the priests. The Bishop has sent the framework, flooring, windows and doors from Port Elizabeth. It will be a convenient house.

What they called a big hangar in our Annales, is a sod building, well constructed, with a good roof, measuring 90 feet by 25. Our people are very pleased with it; we can easily hold the ceremonies in it. It cost us a lot of sweat, especially poor Brother Bernard.

A wagon will leave Maritzburg for Basutoland: it will bring all of the lumber for the new Mission to be founded (a church of 60 feet and a house), as well as doors and windows. Let's hope that this Mission will prosper under the auspices of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I am told that the titular patron will be Saint Monica, an African saint.

Everywhere else in the Mission everything is taking a firmer foothold, no doubt because it is among Europeans. The Bloemfontein convent will be a very fine building, which will overlook the whole city, as you know. Most likely Father Barret will bring the Sisters there about August and perhaps he may stay there. Bloemfontein is a beautiful Mission: there are more than 100 Catholics in the city. There are also many Catholics in Prétoria. The Bishop is talking about sending them a priest. The *Gold Mines* have a secular priest. The *Diamond fields* will have two of them after Father Le Bihan leaves for Basutoland: Father Walsh, an Irishman, and Father Weber, a German. Here in Natal, there are *mirabilia*. Here at Durban, are six Sisters; the High School has 26 pupils, but they are not boarders. The people would have liked to accept boarders; they refused at least 16 from good Protestant families. There is a secondary school with many poor children and a nursery school. The convent and schools are very appropriate. That gives prestige. But the country is always developing,

one doesn't recognize Durban anymore. There are hundreds of Mauritians who emigrate here every month.

Durban will become a very important centre. It would need a priest just for the black or copper-colored people: there are Catholics from Mozambique settling there, there are Coolies. How many souls! how many souls! and almost no one to care for them. They need a church and a school for themselves. I very much like the good spirit at Durban. At Maritzburg, there are Sisters living in your good house. Whenever I go there I am taken with a sacred respect; I recall the happiness that I felt under your direction. These are the walls that I kissed with love! There was a holy silence, the holy Rule went with us and guided us everywhere in that holy house. Beside the house there is a school, a high school. They have boarders: about 40. Most of them are Protestants. There is also the municipal school which is located in the old school.

The school for somewhat older boys is directed by a very good Irish priest who is French in his lifestyle, Father De Lacy.

The Bishop has started to have his episcopal palace built opposite the chapel. He has sent for 9 young men from the Philipstown Reformatory; there are 2 masons, 2 carpenters, etc. I hope to have two of them for Basutoland; they pay them only one shilling per day; they are hired for three years.

These institutions, which owe their birth to your care and economy, are called on to do the greatest good in this country. Boys' schools, however, are lacking. We absolutely need Marist Brothers or those of the Christian Doctrine. Then, we could say that things are complete.

Now, my Lord and very dear Father, allow me to recommend myself to your good prayers. How fortunate is your lot to be so near the venerable person of the Holy Pontiff Pius IX, and to share the place of his captivity. Oh! how I love this holy captive! How I kiss in spirit his venerable feet. Oh! how I implore his blessing! Oh! when will the reign of iniquity

end? When will the great triumphant day come? Your Lordship knows something about that.

I would be so pleased to receive more news and good counsel from you.

Your Lordship and dearest Father, I remain the very humble and devoted son of Your Grace with the deepest respect.

Jh. Gérard, O.M.I.

**19 - [To Father Joseph Fabre, Superior General].<sup>41</sup>**

*Details about the trip to Natal for a stay of 3 months. Hospitality offered on the way by a good farmer. The joy of rediscovering Maritzburg, after being away for 15 years. Foundation of Saint Monica's Mission; multiple works. Chief Molapo.*

Saint Monica's Mission among the Basothos,  
November 22, 1876.

Most reverend and dear Father,

It was near the end of February this year that I left the Mother of Jesus Village to go to Natal and supervise the printing of two books in Sesotho. I was accompanied by a young Christian; we had to cross several rivers by swimming, now on a bundle of rushes, now by holding on to a peg driven into a floating tree trunk. Our trip, made on horseback, lasted ten days; most of the time, we slept under the stars; among others we had one very cold, damp night. Rain and nightfall surprised us in one of those dark, narrow gorges of Drakensberg, without any other shelter than our blanket and a little coat. We spent the night squatting on our heels, resting our heads on our horses' saddle, and striving to give a little runoff to the rain so that it would not completely soak us.

On another day we were luckier. We received hospitality at the home of a good Dutch farmer who saw us passing his house just at daylight's end. He was deaf, but not mute; his

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<sup>41</sup> Letter published in *Missions O.M.I.*, 1877, p. 507 ff..

wife was not mute either. With the help of my young Mosotho Christian, who knew Dutch, we entered into a long and interesting conversation. This good farmer resembled his countrymen, all very religious in their own way and very hospitable; I am talking about those who have been born in Africa and are called *Boers*. Before supper there took place the traditional washing-of-the-feet ceremony. A family member came up to each one with a basin of water and a towel. Since I saw nothing in it but a practice of hospitality, I allowed it and presented my feet. The next morning, they offered us a good breakfast and provisions to continue our journey. We were filled with joy when we came to the heights which dominate Maritzburg. Fifteen years had passed by since I had left this city with Bishop Allard and Brother Bernard to go among the Basothos; my guide, who had been there more recently than I had, pointed out to me with joy and a certain pride the cross which rises above the Catholic Church, convent and school. What a joy to meet first of all Brother Tivenan, whom I did not know, and who threw himself at my feet, like the good Irish! What emotion I felt as I threw myself into the arms of our beloved and venerable Bishop, and then, into those of the young and so pious Father De Lacy. The happiness of seeing the good Father Barret again after fifteen years was reserved for me on the next day, for this Father had gone on a mission that day.

My stay there lasted three months. I was not idle; but I would have been able to work more and better if the house in which His Lordship lived had been more spacious. We were in a confined space, between the uproar of two noisy schools, one for boys and one for girls. And in the house itself, there were nine boys from the reformatory at Philipstown. I suffered greatly from the noise: I didn't know where to find a haven for a little reflection, so necessary to compose and correct my work. But, how good it was to live in community with so good a Bishop, such good priests and so good a Brother!

All my life I will remember the family spirit that I noticed at Maritzburg. Neither can I pass over in silence the edi-



fication I received at Natal from the Sisters of the Holy Family. At Maritzburg and at Durban, I was invited several times to speak to them and say Mass, or to give Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament. May God be praised, dear Father, for having given you such devoted children, such good Sisters as those that I saw in Natal and Basutoland! How lucky they are to have such good superiors! And that good Mother Cécile who left us recently, what a beautiful and holy soul! She loved our poor Basothos so much. What a loss they have in her! It was a great happiness for me to have seen her several days at Durban where our works are going well and are developing. All your children of the two families are truly worthy of their venerable Father. Everyone is at his work. I returned to the country of the Basothos and left Maritzburg on May 11, but it was to go and say farewell to our dear Fathers and Brothers, Sisters and neophytes at the Mother of Jesus Village. When one has been, among the poor, [ ... ] the instrument of divine grace, unbreakable bonds are formed between their souls and the missionary: that is why separation is so difficult.

In my pain I experienced a deep joy when I saw that the good Lord was placing that Mission in better hands than mine, those of a good religious like Reverend Father Le Bihan who had left the Diamond Fields after great apostolic success.

After one week's stay at the Mother of Jesus Village, I left with Reverend Father Barthélemy for the new Mission that the Bishop has allowed to be established in the northeast of Lesotho. Taking a shorter road, we left on horseback, leaving Brother Mulligan with the wagon which was to bring our effects. But all kinds of misfortunes happened to this poor wagon. They tried three times to bring it, each time something went wrong; it always fell into ditches and they had to turn back.

Finally, I went to get it myself at the end of July. I soon saw that the problem arose from a lack of balance. The load was very small, there wasn't enough ballast in the wagon, and, on bad roads, the cover made it tip over and fall.

It goes without saying, dear Father, that we had to suffer at the beginning from cold and hunger. We are glad at that; my dear companions endured all these deprivations very well, with good heart and spirit; that surely is to their credit.

Our limited resources (13 pounds) to found a Mission and the cold winter weather did not make it possible for us to start our work till the end of July. We couldn't find even one helper. We built a small round house and covered it with lime, and entered it on Assumption day. To us it was as useful as a beautiful palace.

After that we were able to hire a few helpers, and we started the building for the chapel. But we had to do everything; we had to mold more than fifty thousand bricks, bake them in a country where there is no wood, look for grass for the roof, buy or beg for it here and there among the Basothos who may have some.

Thanks be to God, through economizing and skimping, and thanks also to the active support of Father Barthélemy and Brother Mulligan, we will have a beautiful little chapel of baked bricks, 60 feet long and 18 feet wide and 12 high. I must say that Bishop Jolivet had the goodness to pay for all the timber, doors, and windows for this chapel and for the community house besides.

When the rainy season came it was impossible to make bricks for the community house; we were constrained to build simple huts, scarcely any more comfortable than those of the natives. There, very reverend Father, is the beginning of the little Saint Monica's Mission.

The location was designated by the country's chief, Molapo, one of Moshoeshoe's first sons, with the approval and agreement of the Queen's magistrate, Major Bell. But the boundaries have not yet been set by the Governor who is alone the absolute master of the country. He has not yet done so for any station. However, Molapo's assistant commander, with a meeting of more than a hundred local men called to-

gether by Molapo's order, showed us a rather vast space for the gardens and another for our school houses and other buildings. The piece of ground is in a very beautiful site. There are three springs there flowing with very clear water which, after irrigating a small valley, spill into a river called Khomokhoane (that is, a black and white ox); the latter, in turn, empties into the great Caledon, which forms the boundary between Basutoland and the *Free State*.

We have in front of us, on one side, an immense plain at least 10 miles wide. There are magnificent pasturelands. Villages spread out on these plains, but they are more numerous along the banks of the *Khomokhoane* and the great Caledon. Three quarters of an hour away from our location, there is also a mountain called Tsikoane with a considerable population on its slopes. An hour's distance away, on the other bank of the Caledon, is a little village of Boers who trade in Basutoland. There we have several Irish Catholic families who come to Sunday Mass.

As I have already said, Molapo is the chief of this land. He is the one of Moshoeshoe's sons who lives most like a European, or even who most resembles oriental monarches. He lives in very great wealth and has built two magnificent houses with verandas. They are well furnished; one of them is for Europeans, the other is a harem. In the beginning this chief seemed cold to us and somewhat haughty. Now that he knows us a little better, he has changed a great deal. He receives me very courteously whenever I pay him a visit. The magistrate is a gentleman who was a major in the English army. He speaks French, has visited Italy, Rome, had assisted at a Pontifical Mass of Pius IX, etc.; he is very good to us. When we asked Molapo for a station, he referred it to the major, as is fitting, asking him at the same time what he thought of the *Ba Roma*. The major replied to him: "All I know about the Romans is good, receive them." His wife is also very good to us; she was brought up in the Grahamstown convent, and she has nothing but high praise when she speaks thereof.

As for the attitude of the Basothos in this locality, we are not yet able to assess that very well. I believe that they are not hostile. They know all over that the Romans stayed faithfully at their post during the war, that they assisted and even fed their great King. They also know that Moshoeshoe used to come and take part in our celebrations, etc. One of the patriotic songs which speaks of Moshoeshoe's exploits was composed at the Mother of Jesus Village by reverend Fathers Hiddien and Le Bihan. Many Basothos have already asked to place their sons in our school.

Yes, my dear Father, we will soon enter into the arena. There the prince of darkness awaits us. His stronghold is defended obstinately in these poor pagan tribes [ ... ] He has recently added another fortification to this one, that of heresy: a short distance away is a Protestant Calvinist Mission, and the ritualists have just set up another one.

But we trust in God, our Immaculate Mother and our patroness, Saint Monica. You will pray very much for us, dear Father, so that the good Lord will work with us, not according to our sins but according to the infinite multitude of his mercy. Have the great goodness to recommend this Mission and your sons to our good Fathers who are the guardians of the Sacred Heart of Jesus shrine at Montmartre.

Very reverend Father, I dare to recommend this work also to your council's wisdom. A painful thought troubles us, namely, the lack of sufficient material means. Because we lack money, we carry on our enterprise in a small way. And yet, we will have to put up other buildings if we are to respond to the need and to the desire of the chiefs. At Natal and Bloemfontein our works are on a good footing, nothing was spared there. Grant that we may be soon able to say the same for our establishments in Basutoland!

Finally, we place great hopes in the Bishop's next visit. He will see for himself what is best to do. My dear companions are Reverend Father Barthélemy and Brother Mulligan.

Father Barthélemy still often suffers from headaches.

Brother Mulligan is in very good health; both of them ask me to give you their most respectful greetings.

I will not wait long before writing to your Paternity again.

Now, most reverend and dear Father, I heartily recommend myself to your good prayers and holy sacrifices.

Accept the expression of the sentiments of affection and gratitude with which I have the happiness to be the very humble and obedient son of your Paternity in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

## 20 - To Reverend Father Martinet, Secretary General [O.M.I.].<sup>42</sup>

*First catechumens at Saint Monica. Arrival of the Holy Family Sisters for the school. Material concerns.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica Mission among the Basothos,  
July 17, 1878.

Reverend and dear Father,

Knowing the special love that you have for our poor African Missions and recalling with joy all the good you have done for them, I am encouraged to write you these few lines. Every day, dear Father, you consider our dear missionaries in various parts of the world, assiduously engaged in bringing in an abundant harvest and carrying the sheaves *cum exultatione* into the eternal storehouses of the Father of the family. But for us at Saint Monica, when will we have that joy? We are still at the *euntes ibant et flebant* [Ps. 125,6]. Even though that is the case, I will tell you everything, content if I can thereby show you an act of gratitude and affection.

At this time last year I let our dear Father Superior Gen-

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<sup>42</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives.

eral know about the blessing of our chapel by our dear Bishop and Vicar Apostolic. I spoke of our beginnings in this Mission; I even gave a short topographic description of it.

Since that time, we have continued our home visits to pagans to make ourselves known and to invite them in a friendly way to come to our services. I say to make ourselves known because too often we are confused with the Europeans in this land, for the Mission is one league from the Free State.

Besides, the land of the Basothos has a multitude of shops and stores. There is a great trade in grain and the Europeans are not always models of virtue.

The attendance has never been very great and has not gone beyond sixty, except on feastsdays.

It must be said that at the beginning many came out of curiosity; e.g. to see Moshoeshoe's portrait, the way of the Cross, the pictures of hell, etc.

Once that curiosity was satisfied, came many celebrations of circumcision; after that the harvest work, which reduced the numbers. But those who stayed and continued to come were people of good will.

Seeing that the men had wanted to learn how to read and write, I gave 2 days a week to those who wanted to come to school.

Several young married people came. I soon gathered in fruit that I had hoped for in teaching them the ABCs; three are already catechumens and a fourth will be received next Sunday.

There are also several men of mature age who come regularly to services and love our holy religion very much. Two of them are influential men and enjoy Molapo's confidence. They still have to struggle against themselves and throw off the heavy chain of polygamy and paganism. The good Lord has already given them a great attachment to the priest. I am very hopeful since they already pray and come diligently; one of them, on a certain Sunday, was so touched and enlightened by grace that he could not hold back his tears in the chapel.

Oh, dear Father, pray for the poor pagans who are very simple, so that they may follow the example of the holy son of our holy patron, Monica.

As for the women, we have found them very difficult, flighty and indifferent. But it goes without saying that a good number are held back by their husbands. Even the wives of our catechumens are still pagan; but I already hope that their husbands' good example will convert them. I already consider them as such.

One good woman and a school girl are catechumens from among their sex.

At the end of October Reverend Mother Marie-Joseph freed two Sisters and a native novice from her community to come and teach school at St. Monica's. We would have preferred to set up a boarding school, but since our financial means were simply nil, that was impossible. The day school did not succeed, for the Mission is a little distant from the kraals. The Bishop is going to come and see us in a few weeks' time; and, I hope, as His Lordship said, a new era will dawn on this Mission, which, through lack of financial means, has only painfully vegetated. We need two good schools. That is the major factor in a Mission. It is the most difficult work. For good teachers, men and women, that is everything.

So we will look at all of that with the Bishop, and I will be glad to keep you informed of our progress and setbacks.

I am very hopeful even though others see things a little in black. Only the Bishop must allocate us a small sum over what we need to live on. We must also have a good lay brother to take charge of the material goods. I hope that I will have a young Mosotho to help teach in the boys' school.

Some time ago there was question of founding another Mission among the tribe of Mota, whom you know. Another chief has on his own also offered a place for another station, which could be cared for by the Missionary at Mota. That site is just a mile from the hut in which we slept on the day when I met you coming to Basutoland. They were thinking of placing

Father Barthélemy there; but since the plan called for some resources, it fell through or was deferred.

At times, I also sadly consider the huge tribes in the north of the Transvaal where the Protestants are trying to set themselves up. Alas! As you used to say already seven years ago, the point that we occupy in Basutoland is nothing more than a pinpoint.

May the good Lord, through the prayers of Mary Immaculate and the intercession of his holy Servant, Pius IX, finally take pity on these poor African Missions, raise for himself saints and powerful workers and remove the anathema which still weighs upon these countless peoples.

I thank you, dear Father, for the little organ that you sent. It has a good effect and pleases the Basothos. Our Sunday singing is not bad; our men have good voices and good hearts. The hymns are well sung with the right timing. They also recite the prayers with great respect and uniformity. That is already a great satisfaction. There only remains that I speak to you about our material situation. First of all, we and the Sisters still live in round huts. We occupy a closed yard some 100 feet square. The chapel, a fine building, is in the middle. On each side, at a good distance, are all of our huts in one line. Behind these huts is a tree garden: gum and wattle trees<sup>43</sup> and peach trees. Lower down from the land on which we have built is a little valley with several very abundant springs. At the far end of this little valley is the land newly cleared for us which can be watered by the stream formed by our springs. You can see how propitious the place is for our establishment. The view is very beautiful. But a lay brother is needed to bring the best from the soil and to take care of everything.

We have a small team of oxen, an old wagon, several horses, a plow, several goats and a very pleasant courtyard. We have a mill [on] the other side of the Caledon, among the Boers. We can go there and return in one day. The cost of the

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<sup>43</sup> An eucalyptus and a variety of acacia.



grinding is 2/6.<sup>44</sup> There is no firewood here. We must first of all plant trees; while waiting we make fire with cowdung or manure that has been cut into blocks and dried.

This is a very long letter, dear Father, to tell you very few things. Pardon me a little.

It would please me very much if I could sometimes receive your good advice and encouragement. When I was in the Mother of Jesus Village, I had the greatest respect for all that you established there in the Act of Visitation. The good Lord inspired you with everything needed for the life and strength of that Mission.

Now, dear Father, as I recommend myself to your good prayers and penances, I beg you to bless me again as you did on the day we said farewell on the mountaintop opposite the Mission. Allow me to present, through you, my most respectful regards to our dear Father Superior General and his venerable Council. Recommend us and our Mission to our dear Fathers at Montmartre. Your very humble and obedient son in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

P.S. A thousand thanks to our dear Father General, to yourself, for the Fathers, Brothers and Sisters who have just arrived in Natal. May God be praised for that!

**21 - To Very Reverend Father General of the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, [J. Fabre, in Paris].<sup>45</sup>**

*First baptismal celebration at Saint Monica, with the participation of Christians from Roma and surroundings. The obstacle of pagan celebrations.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica Mission among the Basothos,  
October 12, 1878.

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<sup>44</sup> Two shillings sixpence.

<sup>45</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives.

Very reverend and dear Father,

You will be glad to learn that on the beautiful day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary the first baptism at the little Mission of Saint Monica took place, even though those rejoicing were not numerous (three young married men, a girl, and a fifty-year-old woman). It was a great event for our district. We heartily thanked the good Lord for having chosen for himself, among so many thousands of pagans, several good souls and for having thereby laid the first basis of a Christianity which, I hope, will grow, rising out of the debris of vices, and from the armed Fortress which the devil has built up over the centuries in these unfortunate lands, which have been his prey from the beginning. Since it was, so to say, the day on which the Church and our dear Congregation took possession of this country, we did all we could to let the eyes of this land see the greatness and beauty of this important act in the holy Catholic Church.

So we profited from Bishop Jolivet's presence among us in order that this first baptism be conferred with greater solemnity by a prince of the Church.

We invited the Mission of the Mother of Jesus Village, and those from Saint Michael and Saint Joseph. Everyone had long wished for it and welcomed it. Reverend Father Le Bihan started out by the mountain road together with many neophytes, men, women and children. The distance from the Mother of Jesus Village to Saint Monica by the shorter road is about 60 miles. The Bishop, accompanied by Reverend Father Monginoux, came in a vehicle.

The boarding school for girls at the Mother of Jesus Village was represented by their worthy superior, Mother Marie-Joseph, Sister Saint Paul and about twenty pupils. The arrival of so many, joyous people to the singing of hymns and prayers made a deep impression in the environs of the Mission. Everyone resolved to go to see the baptismal celebration of the Romans.

An important man of the place, who is our friend even

though still pagan, wanted to help us put on a beautiful celebration by undertaking some of the cooking.

He arrived on the day before the feast with his beautiful wagon drawn by 14 oxen, laden with copper cooking pots, some malted *mabele* to make 3 or 4 hectolitres of beer, with dried cowdung to make the fire, for there is no firewood here. With two rifle shots there fell two head of cattle — they were the main outlay for the feast. A Bishop is a great *Morena* (chief), and one of the qualities of a chief is to be generous, or, as our Basothos say, to have large open hands.

On the eve of the beautiful celebration, while the fires sparkled all over in the little camp, while the bread, the beer, and the meat were cooking, our dear neophytes prepared their souls also in the tribunal of penance so that they could offer to the good Lord a Communion in Saint Monica's shrine for the conversion of so many of their compatriots seated in the shadow of paganism.

At last dawned the great day blessed by God, clear and cloudless. What a joy for us to think that the 1st baptism of this little Mission was going to be performed under the protection of our Immaculate Mother on the day of her exaltation in glory! This good Mother had so visibly shown her protection to our dear catechumens. The demon had neglected nothing in promoting sarcasm, scorn from their own relatives, to prevent them from choosing Jesus Christ as their divine Master. About 10 o'clock in the morning arrived the wife of our worthy Magistrate, Major Bell, and her oldest daughter, together with Doctor Taylor and the Magistrate's secretary. The Magistrate, due to his daily work, could come only in the evening. The Bishop offered Holy Mass during which we sang beautiful, pious hymns. Many neophytes came to the holy table. At noon, when the pagans had arrived, the great baptismal ceremony started. We sang three times, in Sesotho, "In the name of the Father and of the Son ..." The ceremony took place at the chapel entrance, on a platform which allowed everyone to see. First, an instruction was given on Christian baptism, then began the exorcisms carried out by two priests.

We all admired the profound silence, the intense attention paid by all the poor pagans ... I took care to explain to them the beautiful meaning of all these ceremonies, which made them eloquent and meaningful ceremonies. One especially is touching: that of the prostration, when the catechumens are ready to enter God's Church. At that supreme moment, when they are prostrate face to the ground, making their reconciliation with their heavenly Father, we have the custom of singing one of our most beautiful hymns, a hymn of pardon to the French tune: "My sweet Jesus, finally the time has come". Many tears always flow at this beautiful moment.

We can say that the attention and interest of everyone present was continually growing with the importance and magnificence of the ceremonies. There weren't enough eyes to see or ears to hear. After the ceremony, we sang two hymns of thanksgiving and the "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." We led the Bishop once again in procession back to his little pavilion. After that, the material feast took place. That whole multitude sat down on the ground on the withered lawn (since it is the end of winter) and everyone yielded to the sweet, fitting joy of a Christian family. Everything went peacefully, not an unpleasant word, not an argument; many spoke of what they had seen and heard and talked about their good impressions.

What joy, dear Father, if you had been there among us on such a day. You were certainly there in spirit, and in the hearts of your sons. That is another custom they have adopted namely, to have the neophytes pray for your Paternity immediately after the baptismal ceremony. After the good Lord, it is through you, that all this happiness has come to these children.

The Bishop left us for Natal on the following day. Most of the neophytes from the Mother of Jesus Village did not leave here till Monday or Tuesday so as not to run the risk of missing Sunday Mass. Everyone left happy, promising to come again when there would be a baptism. I hope, dear Father, that this first baptism will bring in its fruits at the appro-

priate time. It seems that we have an increased influence. We can say to our pagans: Look at those Christians from the Mother of Jesus Village; how glad they are, happy with their lot, even how well dressed they are. Nevertheless they are Basothos, they were pagans like yourselves. Up to today we have received only two catechumens since the ceremony.

We have also set up a little boarding school, which has only 7 children as yet. That is very few, and yet it is many for our minimal and insignificant means.

Times are bad right now; our Basothos are into their never-ending celebrations, possessed with a diabolical passion for the most evil ones. Like those of circumcision. I see nothing but obstacle upon obstacle and a frightening resistance. However, we do not lose courage. Our dear Congregation's prayers and good works will intercede for us. Your good advice, venerable Father, and your encouragement will not be lacking to us, I know. Your very fine letter which I received some time ago assures me of that.

Since the beginning of August Father Barthélemy is residing at Saint Joseph. Reverend Father Biard will soon come to Saint Monica to take up arms for the first time.

The good Sisters who are here are continually filled with zeal for their work. I am very satisfied with them.

Very reverend and dear Father, bless your sons at Saint Monica and the difficult work that you have assigned to them and accept the respectful homage with which I have the joy of being the very humble and obedient son of your Paternity.

Jh. Gérard, O.M.I.

**22 - [To Bishop Jolivet, Apostolic Vicar of Natal].<sup>46</sup>**

*Internal difficulties at the Roma Mission. Father Monginoux's reforms.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica, October 17, 1884.

Your Lordship and dear Father,

Reverend Father Monginoux brought us together in Council last week. Thank God I was able to get there without too much fatigue.

First of all, we discussed the state of turmoil that they said existed in the Roma Mission, a state that they made you aware of by telegram.

I don't doubt that there was some consternation when the reverend Father Superior wished to make some truly necessary reforms, as your Lordship well knows.

One is truly astonished with everything that has been said and written. Things are exaggerated. Concerned in this business are several lesser chiefs, two or three, who down

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<sup>46</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives. Some have attributed to Father Gérard a letter sent to Father R. Rey with an offering from the Basotho people for the Montmartre Basilica. This undated letter, from the 1880s, doesn't seem to have been written by Father Gérard, because of some of the details and its style. The text is found in E. Baffie, *Le bon Père Achille Rey, o.m.i.* p. 232-233: "Enclosed find a bank note of five pounds. We offer one stone for the basilica of our national shrine and ask that you write only one word on it: Basutoland. We hope that, one day, when we start a Mission dedicated to Blessed Margaret Mary or to Saint John the Evangelist, the Sacred Heart will remember us. He will know that in the magnificent church of Montmartre there is a small stone with the one word: Basutoland. The Sacred Heart will see that this stone in the immense basilica's foundation is a prayer and a seedling; a prayer that the country represented will adopt the cult to the Sacred Heart; a seedling, so that this offering freely given by the Basotho people who are in dire need and sent by the missionaries who count every last penny to meet their expenses, might bring much fruit. It will touch the Sacred Heart and the friends of the Sacred Heart so that when the work on the summit of Montmartre has been completed, they will show heartfelt interest in the affairs and the chapel to the Sacred Heart located at the end of the African world."

deep are not very interested in us; and why bring them together for a matter such as this, the reform of certain abuses, the improvement of a Mission.

I believe that you will meet there also some Christians who do not have the true spirit of humility, or respect; people that we trust too much, who hand over their superior to the court of their judgement.

All these elements and probably others as well, inspired by the enemy of salvation, have raised a storm; probably good Father Deltour allowed himself to be swayed. When all is said and done, I believe that the devil was not happy. Really, your Lordship and dear Father, the reverend Father Superior shares all your wise viewpoints. My own opinion is that it is he who will save the Mission. He himself is aware that he must restrain his zeal, but he understands all our needs and he is a man of the Rule.

We have long been wondering why one Mission should have a monopoly on everything: Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and money received, and not acquired through work, when other Missions don't have the necessities and where the priest is a part-time lay brother!

Dear Father, what trials and anxiety we cause you! Do we have to turn back on the road of these reforms? I don't think so; that would help nothing and encourage bad spirits. All that has shown that there was an illness to cure. May the good Lord, through the prayer of our Immaculate Mother, enlighten and give you strength. I may be very mistaken (and I hope so), but dear Father Deltour, with so many good qualities and who is admirable, is too weak. In some ways, it is a repetition of the other matter which took place two years ago, which caused you so much worry.

To tell you everything, I believe that if Father Le Bihan had been able to change places and return to Roma, things would perhaps be better: Reverend Father Superior's authority would, I think, be more supported. Or another capable, level-headed Father who would come from outside Lesotho. For be-

sides Father Le Bihan, there is no other fit for that. Finally, dear Father, continue to have patience with us.

Here, we are going very slowly, according to circumstances. Several notable conversions have taken place; I hope for others. Our district is quite good. The Basothos are not tyrannized by their chief as they are in other districts where those little kings drink. It's terrible! We are working very hard on the enclosure wall. I would be very grateful if your Lordship would be good enough to send us the 25 pounds<sup>47</sup> that you promised for this matter; for the people working on it are in great need of food, are faced with a famine.

The bricks for the house are going to be finished; I can pay for them. Mr. Carr, the mason, is here and is starting the foundations. Our people help me a lot in everything and I am pleased with that. I am in good health. I was very glad with the details that reverend Father Superior gave us of your visit to Kokstad and Umtata.

Thank you for your blessing. I recommend myself to your prayers, your Lordship and dear Father, with full filial affection and I remain your Lordship's very humble and obedient son.

Jh. Gérard, O.M.I.

P.S. We don't know whether we must register here the baptisms that we perform in the Free State.

My regards to good Father Barret; my regrets for not having written to him yet. My regards to all our dear Fathers and Brothers.

### 23 - [To Bishop Allard, at Rome].<sup>48</sup>

*Reception of Bishop A. Gaughren, Apostolic Vicar for the Orange Free State, and third Bishop of Lesotho. Various news items. Baptism of 17 adults by the Bishop at Saint Monica.*

<sup>47</sup> Twenty five pounds sterling.

<sup>48</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives.



L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica, March 2, 1887.

Most reverend and dear Father,

I deeply reproach myself for having let these several years pass without giving you news from the Basutoland Missions which are always so dear to you. Good Father Barret wrote and told me how happy he was when he met your Grace in our house near Turin. I envied his joy very much. The older I get, the more lively and helpful your memory becomes. I reread with great benefit your good letters, and I keep them all very carefully.

Several weeks ago, we received a visit from Bishop Gaughren, the third Bishop of Basutoland. I went with Father Deltour as far as Bloemfontein to meet his Lordship; there he held his 1st Vicarial Council.

It was exactly 25 years since Your Grace was there with your Servant. Everything has greatly changed; that hill we climbed, full of big blue rocks, has become the site of a beautiful convent, a beautiful church and a fine house for the Fathers. This convent does a lot of good. The Boers are starting to send their children there in preference to their own schools, which are not lacking. In revenge, a Protestant minister, the worst kind of bigot, distributed the notorious writings of Chiniquy,<sup>49</sup> the apostate in Canada. I think it was that wretch on whom you closed the door of our novitiate and of whom you spoke several times.

In Basutoland, they had great celebrations for Bishop Gaughren, who would have preferred to come without pomp and ceremony as you once did. The Bishop was very pleased with everything that has already been done. Father Le Bihan's Mission is going very well; he had 18 baptisms and soon will receive 16 catechumens.

At Gethsemane — at the place of Mota, Moshoeshoe's son where you often slept when coming from Natal — the

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. Oblate Writings, vol.1, p. 166, 167, 183, 188.

people are very obstinate; however, good Father Biard is consoled with some good conversions from time to time.

The Bishop has opened and blessed a new chapel at the place of Ramanella's son; it is entrusted to Father Porte. It was a monstrous celebration. The chief had recommended<sup>50</sup> the feast to his people. He was there himself with his father Ramamella, that famous chief who caused the war with the Boers.

Here we presented 17 adult catechumens to the Bishop for holy baptism. A Protestant lady made her abjuration. Her brother had preceded her by several months. They both received confirmation on the same day.

Our celebration at Saint Monica was beautiful. Jonathan, Molapo's son, was there with a large number of people; also our Magistrate and a few Europeans. The Fathers near the Free State have each a small district to visit; that is why I go to visit a good Catholic family from time to time, as I used to go to Mr. Coghlan's place. These days I am busy building a school-chapel at some distance from Saint Monica. It will be dedicated to Blessed Margaret Mary. Dear Father, pray for all our works. It is sad to see heresy threatening to make more and more inroads among our poor Basothos. We are 10 times too few in number. We need good school teachers, but that is difficult, considering the inconstancy of our young people. The good women that we have at Roma have done much good. They are always good Christians, living alone with their children or grandchildren. I see them when I go to Roma; they always remember your Lordship, your advice and example. Veronica's oldest daughter is the one who writes to you. You know how much trouble we had with her when she was at school. The poor child has become good and steadfast in virtue, by the sweat of her brow. She is a professed religious, very useful, very devoted to her work at Gethsemane. Poor Perpetua, one of her youngest daughters, is also a novice; she

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<sup>50</sup> The French has "ordered".

has a firm and zealous character like her mother. There was another Antonia; she made her profession in Natal 12 years ago. She is Sister Saint Bernard, a niece of Elizabetha, Swape's wife. Here, I have no catechists like these good women at Roma; I have not yet found any of their quality. Our good Sisters are Sister Saint Paul, Saint Alphonse, a young Sister, daughter of Mrs. Brook from the Diamond fields and a Mosotho novice whose relatives are at Saint Michael. Piteroso and Dionisa are her parents, a good family, who were converted after poor Helena defected.

Most reverend and dear Father, do continue to pray for your servant and son who considers himself very fortunate to have you as a Father and Bishop.

Recommend our Missions to the pilgrimages that you have the chance to make with such piety. Pray for us especially at the confession of Saint Peter. Our good Sisters greet you and recommend themselves to your holy prayers. Joannes Maria and his wife, also the daughter of Swape, wish you so many good things to you and ask your blessing; Veronica, M. Eugenia, Birgitta, and Paulina also greet you and ask for your blessing; and good Brother Bernard, always so reverent and always the same, greets you also.

Most reverend and dear Father, I am happy to be, with the greatest respect and filial affection, the very devoted son of your Lordship in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.

Jh. Gérard, O.M.I.

## **24 - To Reverend Father Soullier, O.M.I., Visitor of the Missions, 1st Assistant General.<sup>51</sup>**

*Greetings and best wishes to the Visitor. Close to 300,000 pagans in Lesotho. Hopes for the appointment of a Father assigned to oversee all the Missions. Regret at Father Monginoux's departure.*

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<sup>51</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives.

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica, October 8, 1888.

Reverend and dear Father Visitor,

It is only today that I received your good letter. I must say at the outset that I blushed when I saw that it came from you! That is too great a kindness on your part. It is I who should have greeted you first, you, the envoy of our dear Superior General and dear Congregation.

The first news of your arrival in Africa, reverend and dear Father, brought me great joy, and inspired me to say wholeheartedly *Deo semper gratias!* Such sweet joy occasioned by the proximity of a dear Father, almost the equivalent of our good Father Superior General, is only experienced by those who are at such a great distance from the cradle of our holy family and so isolated from our first superiors! Oh, be most welcome! May the good angels protect you, and carry you quickly to wherever the good Father of the family sends you to do good and to save souls.

I certainly unite my poor prayers and those of our dear children to everything that your fatherly care is doing or will do during your visit, which will be both sweet and painful. I assure you wholeheartedly that I am not able to give your Paternity the information you seek about our Basutoland Missions and those of the Vicariate.

But I know that you will easily and quickly see what we lack. Our good patroness, our Immaculate Mother, will tell you everything.

But since you wish some information, I hazard to say that we certainly need men, in view of the good élan that exists and which, let's hope, will spread through Basutoland. Close to 300,000 pagan souls, that's a good prize. But we would need men who are still young, to learn the language and to grasp well the spirit of the missionary to the African. And since time is needed for that, the sooner the better.

We also need an intelligent, zealous Father who is deeply religious, to be immediately at our head, whose mission it is

to oversee all the Missions under the inspiration of our dear Apostolic Vicar. You know, dear Father, how much some of us have regretted Father Monginoux's departure. He was the man for the post. If things had succeeded, it seems to me that he would have greatly advanced our Missions. But the good Lord did not wish it so.

Excuse me, reverend and dear Father; at this time I do not want to hold up this letter which, due to circumstances, I am unable to finish.

I will soon write to you at greater length. Our good Sisters are all grateful and offer you their respects. Dear Father, pray for us and our Mission. I remain most respectfully and with filial affection the very humble and obedient son of your Reverence.

Jh. Gérard, O.M.I.

## **25 - To Reverend Father Soullier, 1st Assistant and Visitor of Missions.<sup>52</sup>**

*Precisions on the need for someone in charge of the missionaries' religious life.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica, October 16, 1888.

Reverend and dear Father Visitor,

Today I am able to continue our little conversation. When reverend Father Porte went to Bloemfontein to print a catechism and a prayerbook, he left his Mission in the hands of a young man, a native school teacher. I go there once or twice a week. Thanks be to God this overload of concern will cease. At Ficksburg he sent me a telegram that I send him his horse from here to Mr. Pitout's place at 7 o'clock. I have waited a long time for his return. Here I do not lack things to do. Our people are at a considerable distance, at least some of them. The natives of this country are not like in America. It is

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<sup>52</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives.

a heavy snowball that you have to push continually up an almost vertical mountain slope.

To come back to the information that your Reverence asked me about, I say: evangelizing this country (about 300,000 souls) in the midst of every imaginable obstacle, from paganism, [ ... ] Protestantism and Africanism, calls for missionaries with a very deep-rooted religious life. It requires good, solid organization. That is why I said that we must have at our head, under the inspiration of our Bishop, an intelligent, zealous Father who is deeply religious, whose special mission would be to see how religious life is practiced among us, who would preach us our retreats, hold Councils, conferences, in a word, who would undertake the interests of all the Missions.

A young Father told me one day that they should not count on us too much. I think he wanted to say that our good Superiors should not think that we are self-sufficient; that we don't need their advice, exhortation, vigilance, visits, etc. We need all that. And so welcome once again, reverend and dear Father, come and help us be better Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

It was divine Providence that suggested to our most reverend and dear Father General to send you to begin with, before sending the young Fathers whom we need so dearly. They will come and find everything well organized. They will be very courageous and the good Lord's work will progress in this poor land, among this very intelligent nation.

I don't have to tell you how the good Sisters of the Holy Family carry out their work with marvellous zeal. You will find that your dear daughters have the same spirit that you noted in them when they were in France.

Now, if I were to still have something important to tell you, I will do it later.

Once again I recommend myself to your good prayers and sacrifices.

Reverend and dear Father, I have the happiness to be,

with the deepest filial affection, the very humble and obedient son of your Reverence in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

**26 - To Reverend Father Soullier, 1st Assistant and Visitor.<sup>53</sup>**

*Father Visitor will come from the Transvaal, via Bethlehem (city in the Orange Free State). Sending a vehicle to this city.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica, December 18, 1888.

Reverend and dear Father,

I have just learnt by letter from Reverend Mother Saint Marcel that it is quite possible that you may come directly to Saint Monica. I welcome this plan with great joy.

I have already spoken to Mr. Mitchell who had obtained a special vehicle for Reverend Mother to go to Bethlehem. He told me that he could render us this service again. I hope that your long forays in the Transvaal will soon be over.

I accompany you in spirit at least and in some prayer. Isn't it true, Reverend Father, that the Congregation should be proud of the share that the Master of the family has assigned to it?

How happy our good Father Superior General would be if he could come and see his sons in Africa!

Finally, you will rest a little in Basutoland and in the Free State. These two countries are like two little gardens in comparison to the Transvaal.

Reverend and dear Father, I wholeheartedly wish you the joys and blessings of this holy season. I hope that we will wish each other a Happy New Year at Saint Monica.

Recommending myself to your good prayers and sacrifices, as well as our poor Mission, I am pleased to remain, reverend and dear Father, with profound respect and affection,

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<sup>53</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives.

your very humble and devoted son in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

P.S.: Allow me, Reverend Father, to offer via yourself my affectionate regards to Reverend Father Monginoux and our dear Fathers and Brothers.

**27 - To Reverend Father Soullier, 1st Assistant, Visitor to the African Missions.<sup>54</sup>**

*On New Year's Day (1889), Father Gérard will go across the boarder to meet the Visitor.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica, December 30, 1888.

Reverend and dear Father Visitor,

The bearer of this letter is the man who is to drive you to Ficksburg. I hope that he will please you, the good Mother Provincial and her faithful secretary. How happy we would have been to go and meet you, but we cannot do so, as you had hoped. I do not know the name of the gentleman who will drive you because they did not yet know who would go. I believe that the driver would be glad to spend a night at Bethlehem and to rest his horses. That is why we will not see you before the evening of New Year's Day. I will be at Ficksburg about 4 or 5 o'clock in the afternoon to meet you.

I hope that the good Lord has protected you during your laborious trip and that you will arrive at Saint Monica in good health.

Dear Father, bless us all and everything.

See you soon. What happiness the good Lord is preparing for us through your visit!

Your very humble and obedient son in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

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<sup>54</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives.



P.S. Our regards to the good Mother Provincial and her faithful secretary.

**28 - To Reverend Father Soullier, 1st Assistant, Visitor.<sup>55</sup>**

*Deep attachment to the Lesotho Missions.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica, January 12, 1889.

Reverend Father Visitor,

I have finally been informed that the two boxes brought from Johannesburg by Mr. Ward's wagons, are to be brought tomorrow, Sunday, at about noon, to the Caledon passage near Ficksburg. A woman will carry them on her head and the *scotch-cart*<sup>56</sup> will pick them up and leave immediately for Gethsemane. If the scotch-cart can travel by night, I hope it will arrive in Gethsemane on Monday morning.

I am sending you several letters which were in the *same* envelope as a letter addressed to me from Reverend Father Monginoux. A newspaper was also addressed to me; I am sending it to you as well; it concerns Your Reverence more than myself as you will see.

I found my poor sick man still alive. A torrential rain near the Mission of Blessed Margaret! We couldn't see the tracks of Mother Provincial's wagon.

After all that I deeply regretted having left Your Reverence so quickly and for nothing. While at Sion someone asked me if it wasn't a question of changing Fathers; you can imagine how I replied. I don't like questions very much.

But something else caused me more grief. This is the 2nd time that I hear a Father talking in a despairing manner about the state of our Missions and of the spirit of the poor missionaries that came before he did. I hope that he tells Your Rever-

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<sup>55</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives.

<sup>56</sup> Small carriage.

ence all that. He said that if they could take us all away from this Mission and send us elsewhere, then that should be done. My heart truly bled when I heard all those things or opinions. We all have our faults, we all have need to be strengthened in the religious spirit and we are happy that you have come to help us find it again and keep it. But to say that they should withdraw us from our Missions for which we came to live and die for, is a bit harsh! Who would be able to stay here if he did not love them? It seems to be that there are bonds and there are bonds!

If one is not bonded to his Mission, how could he stay there and endure so many moral and physical hardships?

We have very recently seen an example that our good Fathers are ready to leave, if obedience so requires. I want to speak about good Father Biard; wasn't it admirable what he did? I am certain that all of our dear old Fathers would do the same thing, if obedience wished it. Holy Church, infallible as it is, does not judge internal things; I think that is a good rule of charity.

I praise the good Lord who has deigned to choose you to visit our Missions; I am totally confident. As you told me, you will little by little form your own assessment, as you see and hear things during your too-brief stay in Basutoland. If everything they tell me is true in your good judgment, I admit we will have something to expiate: 35 years of straying, mistakes, are not trifling matters when one considers that he must render an account of everything to the Supreme Judge.

I recommend myself to your good prayers and sacrifices and good advice. I am happy to remain, reverend Father Visitor, your very obedient and humble son in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

**29 - To Reverend Father Soullier, 1st Assistant, Visitor of Missions.<sup>57</sup>**

*"In these areas count very much on people and things." Difficulty in forwarding Father Visitor's suitcases.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica, January 15, 1889.

Reverend Father Visitor,

I am very upset that your suitcases have been so late in reaching you.

I sent the cart last Sunday, expecting to find them at the Caledon passage, for Mr. Ward had promised to leave them there. But, not finding them there, we risked crossing the river to go to Mr. Mitchell's place and see if they were there; there was nothing. On our way back the oxen had to swim in several places of the river, for it had swollen so much.

Yesterday, I again sent the cart directly to Mr. Ward's. Finally, after being held up very much by the rain, the cart has just arrived.

Today, Tuesday, at eight o'clock in the morning, it is going to leave for Roma, and, to be safe, will pass through Gethsemane.

I hope that the suitcases will not be too dampened. Our poor cart has no covering; we did our best to wrap the two suitcases up well in sacks and covered everything with a piece of canvas cloth. You must have been rather concerned when the cart did not arrive as I had indicated.

So, you see Reverend Father, that you have to count very much on people and things in these areas. I hope the cart will arrive safely.

At last, Reverend Father, you have probably reached Roma; and your heart will have rejoiced to see so many beautiful bouquets gathered by our dear Oblate Fathers and Broth-

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<sup>57</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives.

ers and our good Sisters, your dear daughters! What will it be like when you have completed your good visit? We can already hope that everything will improve, for the glory of God and the salvation and perfection of all the souls for whom the good Lord has sent you. I sincerely and fully share the regret you experienced in not finding you dear departed Brother Bernard!

I recommend myself to your good prayers and sacrifices, I have the joy, Reverend Father Visitor, to be your very humble and obedient son in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

### **30 - To Reverend Father Soullier, O.M.I., Visitor and Assistant General.<sup>58</sup>**

*At Roma the Visitor baptizes 80 people.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica, January 25, 1889.

With deep gratitude I received your good letter yesterday and the very precious religious articles that you had the goodness to send to our poor Mission. A thousand thanks. I am truly confounded by the thanks that you had the goodness to address to me, because I am not aware of what I did to merit them.

It will always be a great joy to do something for the right arm of our dear Father General. I hope, Reverend and dear Father, that the good Lord, who is always so kind to his own, will grant me the greatest grace to go to the retreat and the joy of seeing you again.

In spirit and with my whole heart I will be at the great celebration of baptism at Roma. What joy on earth and in heaven, when Your Reverence will pour the holy water and give 80 pure and holy souls to the Church; and soon 40 others will follow.

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<sup>58</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives.

May our good Immaculate Mother, Lesotho's patroness, pray so that the new Christians may be a sacred leaven, which will raise up a good mass of people from this nation.

I hope that their guardian angels will sustain you during the course of so great a ceremony.

I believe I can tell you, reverend and dear Father, that my health is better than people think.

I recently paid a visit to the Free State, to the Payne family and several Basotho Catholics, without experiencing fatigue. At the Mission of Blessed Margaret Mary I was fortunate enough to give baptism to a dying child (in secret). We have 4 or 5 requests for the catechuminate.

Reverend and dear Father, bless us, our works and persons; and I recommend myself very specially to your good prayers and sacrifices, I am, reverend and dear Father, Your Reverence's very humble and obedient son in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

### 31 - To Reverend Father Soullier, 1st Assistant and Visitor.<sup>59</sup>

*Spiritual benefits derived from Father Soullier's visit and the retreat he preached.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica, March 29, 1889.

Reverend and dear Father,

I think that by now you will be at Bloemfontein or Kimberley and I hope that the good Lord blessed your trip to Natal. How much fatigue, anxiety, suffering, this trip must have caused you, even at the very beginning with the accident that happened to the good Mother Provincial. May the good Lord be praised. You came to our Missions to preach to us *verbo et exemplo (in omnibus)*. All that will bear fruit, dear Father.

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<sup>59</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives.

In leaving you, I still consoled myself with the hope of seeing you again on this earth. What will become of this ray of hope?

However, it is also a joy when I think that you are still somewhat close to us. Reverend and dear Father, I thank you again for all the good that you have done for me with your visit and the retreat. I will not forget your good advice, paternal exhortation, and the good spirit of an Oblate of Mary Immaculate which you so greatly desire to see growing stronger in ourselves.

Thanks to God and to the prayers of our good Immaculate Mother, I say my office with more regularity, and my meditations also. I still have a lot to do, however, for my examinations of conscience, to do them in a fruitful manner. I could have found the time to study theology a little; I failed in that. Thanks be to God, the retreat's good impression still remains very much alive in me. Pray, dear Father, that this good odor does not fade and I follow closely my special little program. As for the Mission, it is going on its little way. We have accepted 13 catechumens since your visit. Other pagans are starting to open their eyes. One has been converted as well at the little Mission of Blessed Margaret Mary. Praised be the good Lord.

Our good Sisters are well. My Sister Marie Catherine is much better; your visit did her considerable good. I am very glad about that. You will be happy to learn of this welcome change.

Since your departure my health has been very good.

I recommend to your good prayer the baptism of 3 adults which will take place the day after tomorrow; one of them is a rather important man. His baptism will do good, he is well disposed. Our poor man, ill with dropsy, has died in a good frame of mind. A young catechumen has also died, almost suddenly; I was able to baptize her. A good old man has left us also; his pagan children buried him at their place.

Finally, reverend and dear Father, I will soon send you

the notes that I gathered together in memory of our dear Brother Bernard.

Bless us all again and pray for us.

I am pleased to remain, reverend and dear Father, with the greatest filial affection, your very devoted and obedient son, in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

### 32 - To Reverend Father Soullier, 1st Assistant and Visitor.<sup>60</sup>

*Farewell to the Missions' Father Visitor.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica, April 1889.

Reverend and dear Father,

I have received your good letter. I felt very upset in learning of the sad business that sent you to Natal at the expense of so much fatigue and danger. And even then, all you gained from it were vexations and disappointments. May the good Lord's will be done. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus, for whose love and glory you strive continually and everywhere, console you abundantly with his most intimate consolations. It is quite necessary that God's works, like souls, must suffer some bitterness, to remind them that they are the works of the divine Crucified One!

Must we think that May 1st, so sweet in itself since it is the 1st day of the month blest a thousand times by our good Mother, will nevertheless be the day of your departure for Europe and your return to our dear Father General?

Farewell then, dear Father, and no doubt, farewell for eternity. Bless us again and always pray for us at Saint Monica. A thousand thanks for all the good you have done for us.

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<sup>60</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives; there is no date on the original, but Father Soullier wrote on the first page: "received June 24". The letter was written in April since Father Gérard speaks of the approaching departure of the Visitor on May 1st.

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be like your ship to bring you safely to the holy port that you had to leave to come to our Missions.

My very respectful and filial greetings to our Reverend Father General and his venerable Council.

Farewell, farewell, farewell! dear Father.

All yours forever in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.

Your most devoted and obedient son,

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

P.S. Good news: the Apostolate of Prayer has been canonically established here by dear Father Porte.

A good impetus to our holy religion here and at Blessed Margaret Mary. Bless it! What would it be if you could give me a good Brother?

### 33 - To Reverend Father Soullier, 1st Assistant.<sup>61</sup>

*Saint Leo's farm in the Free State. News from Lesotho. Father Cenez takes care of the Mission of Blessed Margaret Mary.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica, April 28, 1892.

Reverend and dear Father,

It is now a long time ago that I received your good letter for which I thank you with all my heart. We do need to be encouraged from time to time by our good Superiors. They do us a great act of charity. Pardon me for having waited so long to reply. Your Reverence asked me for some information about St. Leo's farm. Since Father Auffray left, I have gone there three times to give a mission to the Christians who are living on the farm and who come from Saint Monica.

Brother Kurten says that they are about sixty, counting the children. They are in a situation similar to that of the Ba-

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<sup>61</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives; another person has written the date, April 28, 1892, in pencil.



sothos on farms of the Boers. To be sure, the regime is very paternal. Reverend Father Morley says Mass for them every day, conducts funerals and baptizes the children; he does not know their language. On Sundays a good Sister teaches catechism. They would be very fortunate if there were a Father to take care of them and travel to neighboring farms.

At the end of January I found Bishop Gaughren there, who came for the opening, and His Lordship did a lot of work with his own hands.

The last time, in March, I found the college operating; but his Lordship had gone back to Kimberley. The building is very high, spacious, able to hold 40 pupils. There were only 18 children. They were hoping that others would come soon. I believe that many people are waiting to see what success this college will have. I don't think they intended to complete the buildings now. I heard nothing said about that. The Fathers have a little house, divided into several small cells; there is a little chapel, which certainly cannot hold the small congregation on the farm.

The good Sisters have a little house about two hundred feet away, a real Nazareth. My Sister Saint Julien is the cook, assisted by a domestic worker. The good Sisters render an incalculable service to the Mission by their work and economizing. They are so zealous, such good religious.

Good Father Morley is Father Superior. Brother Kurten is bursar for the farm and the material needs of the college. They live harmoniously together with dear Brother Kribs.

They respect and love each other like good Oblates. I was very edified with the good spirit that reigns at Saint Leo's College. The two teachers, young men, seem to be well disposed; I believe they come from Ireland.

Consequently, I have great hope that everything will go well for the good Master's greater glory and that of our dear Congregation. Religious exercises are observed, as circumstances allow. As for Basutoland and its Missions, things have not changed, as I said in my last letter or rather in my last let-

ters to Your Reverence. May the good Lord's will be done. Dear Father Le Bihan insisted that I go and give a retreat to his good Christians for the feast of Easter. So I went to help him. We spent a very holy week at Montolivet. He has a beautiful congregation which comes from all over. It has a good Christian spirit, a very fine girls' school; his boys' school is less numerous. He has sent children to the Jesuits at Dumbrody and to the Trappists in Natal.

This good priest greatly needs one or two Fathers to help him, to make a veritable breach in this country stamped by Protestantism, and to get to Tshopo's place on the heights of the Maloutis. We often spoke of Your Reverence and of your goodness to our Basutoland Missions. Oh! if only you were among us to guide and encourage us! We could have a little Mission at Ficksburg for the Basothos. The Governor has given us a property to build a chapel and school. We already have a little nucleus there; but what can we do without resources?

Dear Father Cenez is already taking care of the little Mission of Blessed Margaret Mary. He will do a lot of good there. He also has a little school for boys, at Saint Monica. You know too well this good Father so I need not tell you what a good religious he is. May the good Lord keep him with us!

There is a good German Brother at Roma, Brother Weimer<sup>62</sup> who is somewhat of a shoemaker. He would very much like to come to Saint Monica; especially, he says, for the good of his soul. He would do well here. As for Brother Charles, it is a little difficult for me to say if he is really fit for here; I would be afraid for him. There are other Fathers who could do him more good than I.

So now reverend and good Mother Provincial is leaving Africa. My prayers and regrets will go with her. *Omnia dili-*

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<sup>62</sup> Manus.: Veiner; Father Gérard, in this letter, writes: Brother Curtain, although he refers to Brother J. Kurten. We don't know Brother Charles' family name. Mertz, given to Bishop Gaughren in 1889, left after 5 years of vows; he married and lived at Roma.

*gentibus Deum cooperantur in bonum* (Rom. 8, 28).

Our good Sisters are always very zealous and filled with the good spirit of the Holy Family. I must say that last Sunday we received some good Christians into the Holy Family; I shall try to care for them well, so that they may do a lot of good in their villages. Our chapel is well filled every Sunday. Our chief is still disinclined towards us! But if the good Lord is for us, what can he do against us!

Dear and very reverend Father, pray for the Saint Monica Mission, and for your humble and obedient son so that he may love and cherish his holy Rules; that he live them till his death and that the good Lord always give him a great love for the Blessed Virgin, since she has always been his hope.

So, reverend and dear Father, bless everything and everyone.

I am happy to be, with the greatest filial affection, the very humble and obedient son of Your Reverence in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

### **34 - To Very Reverend Father Soullier, O.M.I., Vicar of the Congregation of Oblates of Mary Immaculate.<sup>63</sup>**

*Death of Father Fabre and the vicariate of Father Soullier. Internal problems. Regret for the eviction of Father Monginoux, then, of Father Lenoir. Lack of the Council's consultation for expenses.*

L.J.C.et M.I.

Saint Monica, January 8, 1893.

Very reverend and dear Father,

The death of our dear Father General was a veritable affliction for us. May God's holy will be done. He worked and suffered so much, it was only right that the Divine Master should call him to his eternal reward.

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<sup>63</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives.

So now, very reverend Father, we all have our eyes fixed on you, of whom our dear Father General could say that you were his other self.

Thus it is with my whole heart that I wish you a very successful and fruitful vicariate! Happy New Year! May the Heart of Jesus console and strengthen your own which is so tested, so overloaded. May you be the most fortunate of Fathers, in finding all of us holy Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Knowing your interest for our Basutoland Missions, I profit by this occasion to talk to you a few minutes, with all the simplicity of a child and with the desire for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

At Saint Monica, the little flock is growing, a little each year, thus about sixty baptisms this past year. Father Cenez, a very good religious, is serving the Blessed Margaret Mary Mission. He has also started a little boys' school. The good Lord saved him from a very serious illness that he had recently. The good Sisters are always good religious and zealous in their work.

We are all on good terms, and we make an effort to keep our holy Rules well. Thank the good Lord for me that, through his divine grace and the prayers of our good heavenly Mother and in spite of a great deal of weakness, I have been able to keep my holy vows of religion intact!

Father Porte comes here every fifteen days. The Bishop was recently at Roma. I don't know all that happened, I heard it said that he left very grieved. He went down to Natal; it may be that His Lordship will come to see us when passing through.

Now, very reverend Father, I think that you know our situation in Basutoland. The malaise that you found here during your visit has stayed the same; it is possibly greater, yes, greater. That dates back a long time, according to my reckoning. Reverend Father Monginoux would have been the man for the situation. No one is perfect, but he was a good religious, wanted the practice of the Rule, and was zealous for the

advancement of the Missions. You know what happened to him for having been a little demanding where that was required. He was removed because of reports coming from here or there; were these reports well founded? The same thing happened to Father Lenoir. I know that there was some little reprehensible matter, which one would have easily been pardoned in a man used to living with the Europeans. But, truly, he demanded the observance of the Rule. He was not supported by the personnel; the Africans also had their word to say, so he was forced to leave.

At Roma, to tell the truth, the present reverend Father Superior is scarcely Superior of the Missions except in name. Everything is concentrated in Roma. It is always an abyss for expenses. Council members are not consulted on the income, or the expenditures. It is an empty title.<sup>64</sup> It's very annoying: they have a very lax conscience in the matter of expenses for building which require sums above those allowed by the Rule. I have always noted that and Bishop Allard had told me not to trust good Father Deltour in regard to expenses. They say that Basutoland is going to become an Apostolic Prefecture. We must really pray a lot, so that the good Lord might finally have mercy on our poor Missions and deign to enlighten our good Major Superiors and guide them in the choice of the future Apostolic Prefect. The whole future of our Missions depends on it. If only you were a witness to everything that the sects are doing to take over the country! People are asking us all over. I hope, however, that the Blessed Virgin will pray hard for her dear Congregation's Missions. Basutoland was especially dedicated to the Immaculate Conception by Bishop Allard.

The year's beginning always reminds us of your good visit and the happiness we gained from it. This pleasant memory always does us good.

Bless us and all our works, very reverend and dear Father.

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<sup>64</sup> That of councillor.

With the greatest joy and filial affection, I remain the very humble and obedient son of Your Paternity in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

**35 - To Very Reverend Father Soullier, O.M.I., General of the Congregation of Oblates of Mary Immaculate.<sup>65</sup>**

*Thanks God for the choice of Father Soullier as Superior General. Filial affection and prayers.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica, June 20, 1893.

Very reverend and dear Father General,

With my whole heart, I have already countless times thanked the good Lord for having chosen you to be our Superior General. Oh, how the Sacred Heart of Jesus has shown in this instance that he cherishes our small and very humble Congregation! How the Blessed Virgin has also shown herself to be our good and Immaculate Mother!

So, I am very happy to throw myself in spirit at your feet; and to repeat, with a great spirit of faith and filial love for our dear Congregation and Your Paternity, the cherished vows of my oblation!

Deign to pray for me, so that I at least save my poor soul, for I fully recognize that I have always been and still am a useless member of our holy family.

In Basutoland, we are in a state of anxiety waiting for the settling of affairs regarding our poor Missions. It is a supernatural matter: we pray and have others pray a great deal, since we know that the good Lord guides everything in his divine Providence. We are also certain that the Blessed Virgin is at hand and will pray to her divine Son for this little nation that the Church has confided to her.

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<sup>65</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives.

Very reverend and dear Father, may the good Lord give you good, strong health, so that you may come to visit us, even in Africa once again, as Father General. Oh, what joy! May the good Lord bless your generalate and make it glorious in every part of the world and within the family, through the perfection and the holiness of our souls.

I am pleased, very reverend and dear Father, to be with the greatest respect and filial affection, the very humble and obedient son of Your Paternity, in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

**36 - To Very Reverend Father Soullier O.M.I., Superior General of the Congregation of Oblates of Mary Immaculate.<sup>66</sup>**

*Finally a Brother for Saint Monica, in the person of Brother Weimer. Examination of conscience. Preoccupations and consolations of apostolic work. The Apostolic Prefect is still awaited.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica, November 30, 1893.

Very reverend and dear Father General,

Three months ago Brother Weimer came here to us, saying that the Reverend Father Augier had granted him permission in your name. Sometime later, Reverend Father Deltour also wrote to me saying that the administration had consented to this change for a limited time. At the same time this good Father told me that Brother Weimer was a little undecided, that he formerly had the idea of going to the Trappists. For a long time I knew that he did not want to stay at Roma, but hoped to come to Saint Monica.

I was very pleased with his coming and entrusted the boys' school to him. I did have a pupil from Father Porte's school to teach classes, but I didn't have any confidence in

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<sup>66</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives.

that young man. I didn't know any more what I could do. So Divine Providence came to my aid in the person of Brother Weimer. But my joy could not be complete when I considered that his stay here was not yet decided by holy obedience. If the good Lord so wishes, he would be a good acquisition for Saint Monica. He would give our school a good reputation. Our district would need a good school, one which would easily surpass those that the Protestants have established everywhere in these parts.

Now, very venerable Father, you will be pleased to learn that good Brother Weimer asks permission from Your Paternity to make his religious profession. I have nothing but a good recommendation to make in his regard: he is humble, obedient and punctual, and loves our holy Congregation. His health leaves something to be desired; but it may improve and so I hope it will.

Dear and very reverend Father, this is the third time that I have the pleasure to greet in your venerable person my very reverend Father General, and in spirit to renew my religious vows into your hands.

More than ever, I consider myself fortunate to be an Oblate of Mary Immaculate. Nevertheless it is very humiliating when I think that I have done nothing to give honor to this name; and that I did not respond to the so-beautiful choice that our holy Founder and Reverend Father Tempier had made for the African Missions!

I have no courage, no energy, I have a lot of weakness, of timidity; too much goodness, afraid of being too strict. I lack very much in self-confidence, no doubt due to my lack of cleverness, lack of insight, as they say. Thanks to the good Lord and the Blessed Virgin's prayers, I have kept my religious vows. I especially thank our good Immaculate Mother, for having gained for me from her divine Son a great love for holy purity and a good control over myself. Pray, dear Father, that it may be so until my death.

The state of our Mission is my present great preoccupa-



tion. Presently there is a lot of evil here and there. Some poor souls have returned to their first master: two men became polygamists, two girls returned to pagan rites, some others living badly, abandoning the sacraments for some time. It must be said that these poor Basothos are weakness itself; a good retreat brings them back to the right road.

From time to time the good Lord consoles us with a serious conversion. Thus, for example, some time ago we had the happiness to baptize, a day away from here, a good old man, the maternal uncle of our Chief Jonathan. When the holy water had run over this forehead which had been so obstinate before, he was completely changed. Several times, I did my best to wipe off the holy water; when I was signing him with the holy chrism, his poor eyes were filled with tears of joy and happiness. O divine grace, how well you know the way to soften what is most obstinate, to enlighten what is most in darkness! In these circumstances, you touch as with your finger the power of the exorcism ceremonies prescribed by the Church.

It was a magnificent feast. About fifteen neophytes went along with me. The pagans gathered together there in great numbers. That place is adjacent to the land of Chief Joel, a brother but the enemy of Jonathan. That whole area is asking us for missionaries.

Another consolation was reserved for us on the Sunday of the Dedication: a baptism of 10 adults, from three or four different races: Basotho, Zulu, Malay and Bakhoto.

A good Zulu matron with her daughter merits special mention. She had been brought up from childhood in the religion of Doctor Colenso; she had even translated for him a part of the bible, from English to Zulu. She is one of the most intelligent people, speaking perfect English, *Dutch*<sup>67</sup> and several native dialects.

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<sup>67</sup> Dutch, the language of Holland, but quite different from that spoken by the Dutch people; today it is called Afrikaans, and people who speak it are called Afrikaners, since there is a pejorative sense in the word Boers.

The good Lord enlightened her and had her look for peace of mind in our holy religion. Last year, she had 4 of her grandchildren enter our holy religion. I had great hope that the good Lord would give her the grace to follow them soon. Blessed by the good Lord! She lives in the Camp of *Thlotses Heights*, and will do a lot of good through her zeal; her two grown daughters are also catechumens and will soon go to the school in Roma.

Finally, these past few days we also had a solemn baptism of a good old woman, an invalid, in Jonathan's village. (The chief had gone to the pagan feasts that day). We used candles, and placed beautiful pictures around the old woman's hut. What a joy! She took in her arms the little good Sister Catherine or Saint Peter who did not want to be embraced. Her son gloried in killing a fattened ox for his mother's celebration, as they had also done for Jonathan's old uncle.

That is a good custom which prevails now. It is better than that of the pagans: when their father, mother, or grandfather become very old, they kill a head of cattle for them so that they will be propitious to their children who will survive them. Thus, they anticipate making sacrifices to them while they are still alive. Dear Father, that was an odd digression. Forgive me for it. Thanks to the good Lord and the prayers of our good Mother! Thanks to your paternal goodness in sending dear Brother Weimer here! I handed over to him all the tools of the trades that I have been doing for a long time and now I can attend to my other duties more easily. Thank you again.

Now, what can be said of our situation in Basutoland? Day after day, month after month, we see nothing on the horizon. They had said that the Apostolic Prefect would arrive at the end of November! Help will come to us from patience and holy obedience. It is at Roma that they suffer the most I think. We know through others that Bishop Gaughren has spent these latter days at Ficksburg, en route to Harrismith where he is making a foundation. At St. Leo's College they need good and

numerous personnel, one which lives the Holy Rule. I have gone there several times in the Bishop's absence. I was shocked to see that all did not say Holy Mass. Nevertheless they went visiting and stayed out quite late. They would need at the head of this institution a capable and deeply-religious priest like Father Porte.

I have learned with grief of good Mother Saint Marcel's death; she had shown so much interest in our poor Mission of Saint Monica. Dear Father, your sorrow must have been great and I sympathize with you wholeheartedly; for you know better than anyone else the merit and strength of this beautiful religious soul.

But truly it was time for her to go and receive her reward; she had suffered and worked enough. We prayed and had others pray very much for her.

The death of dear good Father Bermès has also taken me by surprise. Through good Mother Saint Marcel, he had sent me some religious articles and a good book, *Month of Saint Joseph* and the *Breviary meditated*. I finally wanted to write him a good, long letter; it was ready to go and now, he is no longer in this world. I tried to console myself in praying and having others pray for him. We were together at the novitiate in Notre Dame de l'Osier.

Now, very reverend and dear Father, the beautiful feasts of Christmas and New Year's will soon have come. I wish you all kinds of blessings and joys in Our Lord, through our good Immaculate Mother. Bless me and bless all the members of Saint Monica's Mission. Good Sisters Saint Paul, Saint Peter (or Saint Catherine), Saint Francis and Saint Gabriel join with me in greeting you and asking for the support of your holy prayers.

I am happy to remain, very reverend and dear Father, your very humble and obedient son in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

**37 - To Very Reverend Father Soullier, O.M.I., Superior General of the Congregation of Oblates of Mary Immaculate.<sup>68</sup>**

*The arrival of the Visitor, Father Cassien Augier. Nomination of Father Odilon Monginoux as Apostolic Prefect.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica, April 5, 1895.

Most reverend and dear Father General,

I just found your good letter on arriving from Roma. A thousand thanks. I understand how very many duties you have due to the miraculous extension of our dear Congregation. Besides that, how much grief and all sorts of trials come in great numbers to the heart of good Father General. How great the compassion we, your sons, should have for you!

What a fine retreat we have just made under the direction of Reverend Father Visitor. Oh, thank you a thousand times, most reverend Father, for having sent us a Visitor like Reverend Father Augier. What a holy Oblate, what an intelligent Visitor! He is truly your other self. He quickly managed to win everyone's affection and confidence. He keenly understood the needs of our Basutoland Missions. A still very young nation as that of the Basothos which numbers about 400,000 souls, is, in effect placed in our hands as Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Our dear Visitor loves our Missions and often expressed his esteem and affection for us. Reverend Father Monginoux, our dear Prefect, was on retreat with us. Thank you again for have given us a good leader to guide us. May the good Lord give him all the qualities of a good Prefect: a loving goodness, an intimate union with the Administration which is the Congregation's heart, besides all the graces he needs to put everything in Basutoland on a solid foundation. *Finis coronat opus.* I beg the Sacred Heart of Jesus that the crowning soon to take place will be for God's greater glory and the salvation of souls, our own and those of the Basothos.

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<sup>68</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives.

Since the retreat Father Auffray has been here at Saint Monica. In this matter too may the Sacred Heart of Jesus bring about good work.

A good priest is worth thousands of Christians. I have great hope, our good Immaculate Mother will pray for us. He is very peaceful here, and keeps busy with theological and historical studies; he goes to the little Mission of Blessed Margaret Mary, while waiting for the Reverend Father Visitor to finish his visit to Basutoland and the Free State.

Saint Monica's Mission is continuing to extend itself northward little by little and day by day; Reverend Father Prefect has asked Chiefs Jonathan and Joel for two stations there.

I have a good brother in Brother Weimer. He teaches school to 18 boys and does a lot of little jobs which are in a lay brother's department. His health will improve, I hope. He is a good religious. I have a good neighbor in Father Cenez. He is making great strides in Oblate virtues and is very keen in everything. May the good Lord be praised for that and keep him with us for a long time.

Dear Father, I deeply shared your sorrow on our loss of Reverend Father Martinet. How often I thought of him during the retreat. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus ease your heart's grief.

Happy Easter with all its joys! Most reverend and dear Father, I recommend myself to your holy prayers and sacrifices; I am pleased to be your humble and obedient son in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate,

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

### 38 - [To Father Soullier, Superior General].<sup>69</sup>

*Father Alexander Beaudry named Apostolic Prefect. Too many extraordinary expenses. The "old tree" struck down by the flu. Facility in practicing charity, not humility.*

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<sup>69</sup> Orig.: Rome, OMI Postulation Archives. Father Gérard wrote "gloomily" at the end of the third paragraph for shipwreck.

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica, January 10, 1896.

Very reverend and dear Father General,

I come again wholeheartedly today to express to you the sincere wishes I had at the holy altar. Dear Father, may this year be one of the most holy and happy ones for Your Pater-nity. We sympathize deeply with your grief and anxiety in these days of the diabolical persecution that weighs on our dear Congregation. We ardently pray so that the Sacred Heart of Jesus will console and strengthen you as well as your ven-erable Council.

Dear Father, allow me now to give you some news of our Basutoland Missions. First of all, I will say that Father Monginoux' refusal to be our Prefect grieved me and still does. I did not approve nor like his kind of rudeness toward the Administration. I look upon Reverend Father Baudry as having been given to us by the good Lord through you inter-mediary.

Our dear new Prefect is still beginning. He will acquire the necessary experience of this country, so I hope. What bothers me a little is his strong inclination to make extraordi-nary expenses. He saw the Trappists in Natal and possibly wants to imitate them (but they are inimitable). He is bringing in new machines, very costly ones, which we have been able to do without for years. Already there is a lot of talk; for my-self, I fear a shipwreck. He must count on an immense in-come. It seems to me that he would have done well to keep us afloat, or to pay off the little debts of our poor Missions first of all. He would have pleased the missionaries. Then he could have made the most pressing expenditures. They bought a steam-mill which cost 300 pounds; and it had to be recondi-tioned. The good Father told me himself that some influential Christians at Roma did not want him. That would indeed be very unfortunate.

Let's hope that your good advice will enlighten him on his difficult path. How many qualities are needed to be Prefect

in Basutoland! The spiritual life of the Missions is in a *statu quo*, through lack of missionaries.

Here, on our part, I visited Jonathan's brother, Joel, three times; he has given us a piece of land near his large village. Nothing has yet been done. Three times a year, I visit Saint Leo's College and see the Christians. You know the type of Mission at Saint Monica. One has to be a good traveller to visit those farther away from time to time, as well as the sick and old men and women, who cannot come to the Mission. We have had 60 baptisms this past year and 13 deaths. We still have 24 catechumens.

As for your servant, I have been very healthy all year long. In November, after a trip, I fell sick. They said it was the flu; it certainly shook the old tree. However, the Blessed Virgin our good Mother, helped me with her prayers, and I was able to mount the holy altar the day of her Immaculate Conception. Now I am fine and am beginning to regain my strength.

I asked our good Mother to obtain a little respite for me so I can repair my many past faults. Pray, dear Father, that I profit therefrom.

I must deplore a great tepidity in my religious duties. I do them nevertheless. I deplore also the fact that I am too weak and timid in accomplishing my ministerial duties. I have kept my holy vows, with the good Lord's grace and the Blessed Virgin's prayers. To practice charity is very easy for me. But not the practice of humility; how many faults of ostentatiousness! I get along well with the good Brothers who have been or are still here. Regretfully the good Brother Weimer left Saint Monica to go to Sion. Brother Poirier is here in his place. He is very good of unparalleled devotedness; he teaches school and the work required by the residence.

Now, dear Father, bless all of us and our works, and pray for me often at the holy Sacrifice, at Montmartre and at our Mother's sanctuary that you have the joy of visiting so often.

With greatest respect and filial affection, I remain your humble and obedient servant.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

P.S. At the next Council, at Roma, I will dare to speak my mind.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

### **39 - To Reverend Father Augier O.M.I., 1st Assistant.<sup>70</sup>**

*Lack of personnel. Send some missionaries. Details about his flu.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica Mission in Basutoland,  
January 10, 1896.

Reverend and dear Father Visitor,

I am pleased to come again and wish you a Happy New Year. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be with and close to you: this is my sincere wish as you make your long laborious visits from one hemisphere to another. In Basutoland we will always remember you.

I have already communicated some news of our Basutoland Missions to Very Reverend Father General.

With the change of administration and lack of men, the spiritual situation of our Missions are still pretty much in the status quo. At Chief Joel's place, we still have not taken possession of the piece of land that he gave us near his large village. What will he say of the beautiful promises made by our first Prefect: May our Immaculate Mother take good care of all this little corner of the earth entrusted to her by Bishop Alard. The few Christian families that were on the farm at "Saint Leo's College" or in the Free State are in Basutoland, not very far from Saint Monica. They are at Sishope's place, he has been asking for a missionary for a long time.

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<sup>70</sup> Orig.: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives.



At Saint Monica I have good Brother Poirier: he teaches school and works at the residence, with the best of zeal. He has about twenty boys, 12 of whom are residents. I am very pleased with Brother Poirier.

I have been a little sick with the flu, they say. If that is what it was, it struck me very suddenly. However, I had provoked it. It was after a trip, where I had to run hard after an old Christian man who was also running to his eternity. Fortunately, I caught him in his race and was able to help him and give him the sacraments. Another old man, who lived near Joel, did not wait. He died during the time when I was most ill. But he was well prepared. As for the beautiful rosary that Your Reverence gave me (you recall, at the moment of your departure and farewell to us which very much resembled those of Saint Paul), you gave me two beautiful rosaries, blessed by the Holy Father, one for the queen, Peete's wife, and one for me. I have it with me always. It is a holy talisman. I gain courage from it. It was a little tarnished during my illness, because of the "profuse" sweating, but now it will become shiny as always. To be blessed by the Holy Father and to come from your hand, that is something!

Dear Father, since you have given me such a beautiful rosary which I love so much, pray that I may say it well. May our heavenly Mother be pleased and never abandon me. I will not stop praying for Your Reverence, so that this good Mother may be with you always. When you go to the beautiful island of Ceylon, pray for us and our Missions at the sanctuary of Saint Anne. You will not be far from the island of Sancian: beg the Apostle of India once more to pray for our Basutoland Missions. May he inspire through his prayers some holy Oblate Missionaries for Lesotho who will be a little like him.

Now, very reverend and dear Father, bless me and especially our dear Saint Monica Mission, its Christians, catechumens and dear personnel, the dear Brother and fine Sisters.

With the greatest respect and sincere affection, I remain

your humble and obedient son and brother in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

#### 40 - To Very Reverend Father Antoine, Vicar General.<sup>71</sup>

*The death of Father General (Soullier). A new health problem: inflammation of one knee.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica, November 23, 1897.

Most reverend and dear Father,

Faith alone was able to console us at the death of our dear deceased Father General. How can we express the fatherly goodness of his great heart, his affability, intelligence, energy, his beautiful virtues, priestly and religious, and his works.

Our Basutoland Missions will always speak of his visit, which was a special occasion. What happiness I myself felt being near this good Father, and what a fine and holy retreat he gave us. I am very sure that the Sacred Heart of Jesus, through the prayers of our good Immaculate Mother, has filled your heart with consolation during those solemn moments when our good Father was at the point of leaving us. Yes, dear Father, thank you. He will not forget us, he will do more for us now than when he was on earth. Each time that our Fathers Superiors General leave us, our holy Congregation makes greater progress in its works. Now that holy Providence has placed you at the head of our dear Congregation, I hasten to kneel in spirit before your venerable person; you hold the place of God for me, and I renew my vows of obedience, poverty, chastity, and perseverance in our holy Congregation.

Very reverend Father, you know that our dear departed Father General gave me my obedience for Roma. I was on the point of leaving when a very sore right knee prevented me.

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<sup>71</sup> Orig.: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives.

After fighting with the pain I was well advised to go to Doctor Taylor, a friend and benefactor. He prescribed complete rest for me in my room, because the sore could have become very dangerous; I had to resign myself. Finally, after fifteen days, I am starting to walk a little and to say Holy Mass; the knee is not as swollen. I will go to show it to the good Doctor tomorrow; he will let me know if I can leave or must wait. Good Father Deltour has already arrived and Father Debanne as well. I am late in going to the place where the good Lord is calling me. I am leaving Saint Monica Mission in better hands.

Bless me, very reverend and dear Father, so that I may do the good Lord's will where I am going, with the purest intention to promote love for the good Lord, praise for our dear heavenly Mother, and to save my poor soul and others, if the good Lord wishes it.

I have the joy, very reverend Father, of being, with respect and filial affection, your humble and obedient son in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

#### 41 - [To Fathers E. Derriennic and L.L. Philippe].<sup>72</sup>

*Meeting the new arrivals at Ficksburg. Death of Father General.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Saint Monica, [The end of 1897].

Reverend and very dear Fathers,

I am writing you this little note to send you heartfelt greetings. You will be welcome at Saint Monica. I hope to meet you at Ficksburg, an hour from here. I have friends there. If you arrive too late, Mr. Mitchell will be happy to give you hospitality, as he does to many of our Fathers and good Sisters of the Holy Family when they come from Natal.

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<sup>72</sup> Orig.: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives, letter Gérard-Philippe; undated. The two priests received their obedience during 1897, cf. *Missions O.M.I.*, 1897, p. 513.

Be seeing you soon, very dear Fathers. Let's console one another at the great loss that we have suffered by the death of our dear Father General! But the good Lord will help us and our dear heavenly Mother is there to protect her immortal daughter, the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Pray hard for me, and I will pray, or rather, we will pray for you.

See you soon in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Immaculate. Your brother,

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

**42 - To Very Reverend Father Augier, Superior General of the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.<sup>73</sup>**

*New Year's greetings. Decision to build the church at Roma. Arrival of Father Paul Bernard. Fall of the Apostolic Prefect of Basutoland, Father Jules Cenez, in the Orange river. Old age, a good thing.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Roma, January 2, 1899.

Very reverend and dear Father,

It is with wholehearted affection that I come to wish you a Happy New Year. May our divine Master always be with your Paternity in a special way. When Saint Victor was being tortured, Our Lord appeared to him holding the cross in his hands, gave him his peace and told him that he suffered in his servants and crowned them after their victory. That passage is very beautiful and well expresses my thought and desire. So may you be, good and dear Father, the most loved and joyful of Fathers in our Congregation. A ray of hope has come these past days to dissipate the clouds of sadness that have been weighing on our hearts. That's a gift from the Child Jesus, through the prayers of his divine Mother and his dear foster-

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<sup>73</sup> Orig.: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives.

father. You have already guessed no doubt: Very Reverend Father Prefect has finally decided to build the church at Roma! May the Sacred Heart of Jesus give him courage and the means to bring this good work to a successful end.

So beautiful a Mission as Roma will soon have its church, where people will be able to hear Holy Mass comfortably, listen to God's word, hear good catechism lessons, and where the faithful will be able to meditate on the heavenly beauties of Catholic cult. *Deo semper gratias.*

I must also thank Your Paternity for having sent dear Father Bernard. He is already making himself very useful by teaching fine Masses in plain chant [ ... ] which remind us of the pious memories of our youth. The good Father said Holy Mass on Christmas Day at Thaba Bosiu, the former royal city, there where the little chapel of Bethlehem is found, where Masupha went before the war with Lerotholi. Dear Father Bernard, not yet speaking the Sesotho language, has another: that of charity and zeal. The Basothos understand that language very well. That is why he succeeded in teaching the hymns and giving the good example of a good Catholic priest.

In this Mission of Roma we are praying very hard for Masupha's conversion. We visit him often and he listens very attentively, kneels down among his people like a Christian. Dear Father, have the goodness, when you visit the convents of fervent Sisters, to ask for a special prayer for the proud Sicambre. Especially yourself, dear Father, pray for him at the holy sacrifice. You know his queen Nathalia and his daughter, Eulalia, Chief Maama's wife. They are very good Christians, the Clotildas of Basutoland. Recently Masupha's daughter-in-law, a widow governing the Berea district, has become a fervent catechumen, under the firm, fatherly direction of Reverend Father Rolland.

What beautiful things we would see in Basutoland if we had the means! But we must admire the impenetrable designs of the good Lord, pray very hard and make use of the talents and resources that he deigns to put in our hands. Our dear Pre-

fect has recently visited the Quthing Mission.<sup>74</sup> He just missed having an accident in the deep river Orange, when his horse fell into the waters which carried away his *saddle bag* ...<sup>75</sup> That is an immense country, and they want to have a missionary. There are many Catholics there. How can they live well when we visit them only from time to time?

As for myself, dear Father, I am still experiencing good health with God's grace. I like my assignment here at Roma. It is salutary and sweet for an old missionary to return to the holy and light yoke of obedience, and to think about *cum esset junior ... et cum senueris*.<sup>76</sup> When one thinks about the battles one has had to fight in this poor life, one gladly says: old age is a good thing, you are nearer the goal and the reward. However, one must always fear and tremble. So have pity on me and think of my soul during the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

My regards and best wishes to all the members of your venerable Council.

I am pleased to remain the most humble and obedient son in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

### 43 - To Bishop Jolivet, Apostolic Vicar of Natal.<sup>77</sup>

*Bishop Jolivet's jubilee. Conversion of Chief Masupha.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Roma, June 26, 1899.

Your Lordship and dear Father,

The echo of your jubilee's fine celebrations has come even to our valley and we rejoiced thereat. That was a veritable triumph for the Catholic Church and our dear Congrega-

<sup>74</sup> Manus.: Quitting.

<sup>75</sup> In English: *saddle bag*; (Literally) saddle bag, pouch.

<sup>76</sup> Ms.: (quando) cum ..., cf. Jn. 21, 18.

<sup>77</sup> Copy: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives.

tion by means of your venerable person. All the Missions prayed very hard for Your Lordship, thanking the good Lord and the Blessed Virgin for so many graces and beautiful works. We were far away from you. When one cannot see the person loved, nothing represents it better than his portrait. We were at least fortunate enough to have yours; we put it up very high, at the feet of Mary Immaculate who was holding a crown of flowers over your head. We seemed to be very close to you, receiving your blessing; but we regretted that our dear Prefect was not able to attend the beautiful feast. He was forced to retrace his steps because of the many rivers and bad weather. He was thinking about going through Basutoland to get to Harrismith.

Your Lordship and dear Father, when you were governing our Basutoland Missions, you used to know well all the chiefs, great and small. You visited them; you attended the races with the chiefs. You especially knew Chief Masupha. I went with you once to the Thaba Bosiu mountain; a good old woman gave us a chicken she had cooked in water. We went down to Chief Masupha's place; he received you very graciously, had his sons come before you so that you would know them. You will be happy to hear that, at the end, the prayers we said, even in France, have been heard. The Sacred Heart of Jesus won the heart of Masupha. He was baptized 12 days ago. He threw away all the superstitious charms and renounced Satan in front of his family and officers.

You know that the chief had true Christian women in his family: his queen, daughter, and daughter-in-law. He is ill with an inflammation of the chest; they fear for his life. Thank the Sacred Heart of Jesus for all that and continue to pray for his soul so that he perseveres.

The church at Roma is coming out of the ground; it will be solid, large and beautiful. Very Reverend Father Prefect does not do things in half-measure; it will be completed for New Year's day.

Bless our Missions again, as you used to do. I commend myself to your charity and good prayers, Your Lordship and

dear Father, I am pleased to be always, with deepest respect and filial affection, the very humble and devoted son of your Lordship.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

#### 44 - To Bishop Jolivet, Apostolic Vicar of Natal.<sup>78</sup>

*Construction of several churches: the one in Roma is completed, the one in Maseru also, the one in Nazareth is started. Diverse devotions. Boys' school with 60 boarders. War between the English and Boers. Visit of two Trappists in view of publishing books.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Roma, June 27, 1901.

Your Lordship and dear Father,

Pardon me for having waited so long to reply to your good letter, dated March 18th, in which you had the goodness of wishing me a happy feast day and promising me a precious *memento* at Holy Mass. A thousand thanks for your good wishes and the *memento*. All that confounded and consoled me very much. I have always kept a very vivid remembrance of Your most paternal Lordship, one that encourages me here and now. How good it is to see Your Lordship fighting in the breach with several of your Fathers who are still strong enough! What work in the Mission at Durban where every nation of the world is represented, plus the diseases and wars; one is amazed and wonders how you can be equal to all that. Good Father Monginoux, your right arm and former travelling companion, how is he? They say that he left Durban, sick? And is good Father Barthélemy better? Let's hope that the good Lord's will may be done in Basutoland; our health is good.

Your Lordship will be happy to learn that the church at Roma has been completed: they started having services there

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<sup>78</sup> Copy: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives.



on Holy Thursday. One is comfortable therein and able to pray. It has two rows of iron pillars which support the roof. It has a beautiful bell tower. Everything is built of cut stones and very solidly. The mason is an excellent man; no difficulty arose. Thanks be to God that we have a beautiful church, just like you yourself would have had it built. We are truly grateful to our Father Prefect who does well whatever he does. He just had another one built at Maseru that also is an honor to our holy Church. He has had another one started at Nazareth, but on a different site, one more beautiful than the first, where there is water and stones for building.

The work of the missions, since you put things in motion is continually making progress. All the first chapels are now too small, as v.g. at Saint Monica, Gethsemaei, and Sion.

Father Biard whom you baptized as tireless is always the same: he built a church in the Maloutis where the population is beginning to increase. Saint Joseph Mission at Korokoro is a very fine Mission; it will soon equal Roma. You remember, Your Lordship, that they had wanted to abandon that Mission. Luckily you vetoed that. Saint Joseph held firm; he wanted to show us his powerful intercession. Here at Roma we are planning to set up formally a confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, like the Apostolate of Prayer; it will be affiliated to the archconfraternity at Montmartre. As your Lordship knows, devotion to the Sacred Heart was established in Roma a long time ago; but no one made any kind of pledge. People keep the First Fridays very well, the communion of reparation and the daily offering. We place great hope in this beautiful devotion which is so widespread and recommended by our Holy Father the Pope (Encyclical, May 23, 1899).

I recommend the success of this work to your good prayers. We hope that this devotion will keep our Christians fervent. It is more difficult to work at having them persevere than to convert them. Maybe that's how it is.

Good Mother Marie Joseph is always the same. Her school is always well kept; her convent is always very fervent. May the good Lord keep her with us for a long time yet. Our

hope is that two Basotho girls will start their postulancy at the next retreat. Here at Roma we have a beautiful boys' school: they are more than 60 boarders and are making progress in religion and the subjects we give them. We teach them the law of work by practice. Our bursar, a Breton, is young, serious, jovial, very intelligent and a good religious, Father Derrienic. He keeps an eye on the little group; they can't put one over on him. The school is also under Brother Weimer's supervision who is daily making headway in the footsteps of dear Brother Bernard whom Your Lordship knew. Besides that, there is a good school teacher, Justinus, whom Father Porte had already trained. May the good Lord be praised for all these things.

These are the works, Your Lordship, that you encouraged. Bless all of them. The war had no effect on our Basothos. Our young people are going daily to work for the army; they bring money into the country; and come back all dressed in khaki. It has almost become the custom, when a young man wants to marry, he goes to work for two or three months in order to get a wedding suit.

You know, Your Lordship, that some time ago two Trappist Fathers had come to confer with our dear Prefect about the translation of books in Sesotho and other matters. I hope that it will come about. It is much needed. Some books have come out in Sesotho; we are sorry that this step was not taken sooner, these books would have been a great help; but the Sesotho is not presentable; they would not be accepted here in Basutoland.

I recommend myself to your good prayers especially, and all our works; I am pleased to remain, with the greatest respect and filial affection, the very humble and devoted son of Your Lordship in the sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

**45 - To Very Reverend Father Augier, Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.<sup>79</sup>**

*Fifty years of oblation. Pleading for Father Monginoux' return to Lesotho to put an end to an unfortunate discord.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Roma, Basutoland, [beginning 1902].

Most reverend and dear Father,

I am hidden away here in the little house commonly called the Bishop's house, situated up in the botanical garden of Roma. I wanted to be away from the noise a little and speak more comfortably, heart to heart, with my very reverend and dear Father General! First of all, Very Reverend Father, I sympathize with you very much: you are in the midst of the furious tempest which is unleashed against religious congregations. But the good Master, the divine Pilot, will help you; he will hold your hand at the helm. His is all powerful. You will have the consolation of seeing all your children safe after the tempest!

Then I want to tell you that on May 10th next will be the anniversary of my oblation. The 50th! I made it at Notre-Dame de l'Osier. Reverend Father Richard was our novice master. My companion at oblation was Reverend Father Mouchette and a lay brother. At that time there was only the novitiate at Notre-Dame de l'Osier. We were only 12 novices, or better 11, since the 12th was only a shooting star, as good Father Burfin, the superior at l'Osier, used to tell us.

That was one of the most beautiful days of my life; the good odor of my sacred commitments has still not passed away. May the good Lord be praised, may our dear Immaculate Mother be thanked.

What a joy to belong to so venerable a Congregation as

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<sup>79</sup> Orig.: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives, undated. Father Gérard must have written it during the first months of 1902 for he speaks of his 50th anniversary of vows to be celebrated on May 10th.

that of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. How sweet it is to live in it, as it will be sweet to die in it!

Pray hard for me on that day, so that I may obtain from the Sacred Heart of Jesus the grace of final perseverance against which the devil can do nothing. I will place them in your hands, as if you were present; and you will pray to the Blessed Virgin that she keep them well. What encourages me is to think that I will soon arrive at the end. I am speeding towards it; I am in my 71st year and I will certainly be there soon.

Very Reverend Father, pardon me for what I still have to tell you.

Five years ago, I believe, during my visit to Natal, Reverend Father Monginoux told me that he was wrong in not obeying you; that he would be happy to return to Basutoland. Several months ago, the good Father wrote to Father Prefect, saying that he still wants to return to Basutoland, that the climate of the country where he is does not agree with him, that the one of Basutoland is better. He asked to work again with his dear Basothos. Since that time I have had the opportunity to visit Father Le Bihan; I talked to him about this. He was delighted to hear that news, and told me that if Father Monginoux were to come back to us, our Missions would make progress; he would enhance them in the eyes of the Basothos. Since he is a good religious, as everyone knows, with experience and wisdom, he would become a great support to Very Reverend Father Prefect. Father Monginoux would be a true brother, friend and wise counselor to Father Prefect. I myself see things as Father Le Bihan does. I beg the Sacred Heart of Jesus to assist you and enlighten you in this matter. That could possibly put an end to the unfortunate disagreement which exists between Father H.<sup>80</sup> and our dear Prefect, of which you are aware. Very Reverend Cenez is very annoyed with the trouble caused by Father H. He would have preferred that both

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<sup>80</sup> Father Henri Hugonenc of the Roma Mission. Cf. letters of Father Cenez to Father Augier, 1901-1902.

sides simply forgive and forget. But Father H. wants to discuss who is in the wrong. This whole business (since there is no unity any more, no more the necessary relationships,) discourages and wearies Reverend Father Prefect and stops him from giving himself wholeheartedly to his work and his office: v.g. there is no council, rarely a monthly retreat, and no theological conference. Last year the annual retreat was made with a spiritual book; he did not speak to us. Probably it will be the same again. The good Father is not at ease, he is almost afraid. That doesn't help a community. Several times I have heard Reverend Father Prefect complain about the silence of our higher superiors. However, he also knows very well that you are all very busy at this time and that he will have his turn.

Bless me, dear and most reverend Father, and all our works. Pray for me.

I am pleased to be, with profound respect and filial affection, the very humble and obedient son of Your Paternity in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

**46 - To Reverend Father Fouquet, O.M.I., [In British Columbia, Canada].<sup>81</sup>**

*Memories of novitiate and scholasticate. Reciprocal prayer for perseverance. One must be ready to die. The Boer nation is annihilated. The Blessed Virgin saved Basutoland during the war of 1865-1868. Conversions. Best wishes on the occasion of Father Fouquet's golden jubilee.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Roma, Basutoland, December 26, 1902.

Reverend and dear Father Fouquet,

Your good and kind letter has just arrived. It gave me great pleasure, coming as it did from an old friend, a novitiate

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<sup>81</sup> Orig.: Ottawa, Deschâtelets Archives APK 3263 F 772 52. We have corrected the spelling of some badly-written words.

companion, an Oblate missionary priest who has worn himself out with fatigue in our dear American Missions. Not to mention it recalled our wonderful novitiate and scholasticate days. How could one not remember our holy Founder, good Father Tempier, our teachers at novitiate and scholasticate, Reverend Fathers Marchal and Richard, and a whole cluster of holy Oblates. Thank you, dear Father, for your good letter. More than ever (since we have come to the end and almost to port) let us thank the Sacred Heart for his divine protection and our good Immaculate Mother who has held us by the hand throughout all of our lives! Oh, Deo gratias. We are on the point of arrival. Just a little more, and since the end crowns the work, let us quicken our pace. Let us pray and watch! Since Saint Theresa says that as long as we are on earth we can condemn ourselves; and old Saint Jerome tells us that he has seen old men who lived holy lives suffer shipwreck at the port! Perseverance is a totally gratuitous gift, but the good Lord grants it to humble, persevering prayer. So, I promise you, dear friend, that I will be more than ever faithful to our holy union of prayers and good works.

What you ask me, namely, to pray that your death, which may be sudden, may not be unprepared, I will certainly do, but I will beg the good Lord to postpone the moment so that you may be able to save a few more souls.

Besides, we are all quite ignorant of our time, it can come at any moment, whether we are young or old. *Nescitis neque diem neque horam*. [Matt. 25, 13] I think that you knew dear Father Bompert and Father Barret.

Father Bompert is a missionary at Bloemfontein. He would be able to tell you of the deeds and disasters of the English in the Free State and the Transvaal, and Father Barret in the Natal colony where he has always been superior at Pietermaritzburg!

I am pleased to learn that Sir Butler's brother is a friend of yours. I am fairly well acquainted with the Boers and they have always shown themselves kind and hospitable to us. Once we came to a large rich farm where there was a large

family. They invited us to supper. A little before supper, we saw them bringing out a pile of old booklets, they were the psalms. First they sang and then the washing of the feet took place. A servant girl or daughter of the family came to wash the feet of each of us, and we also took part in the ceremony, Bishop Allard and I. They (the Boers) were very kind to us in the great war that they waged against the Basothos around 1868. Now, that little nation has been annihilated. Let's believe "everything for the elect".

It is the holy Immaculate Virgin who led us to the Basothos. She is the one who saved the nation in that terrible war of 1868. Thanks be to God, this nation is little by little being converted, is continually multiplying. The Drakensberg mountains, inhabited by the Baroa (African pygmies) and wild beasts, are filling up with villages. The climate is excellent. Basutoland is called the Switzerland of Africa.

Dear Father, as to your golden jubilee that you celebrated on December 8, my good wishes, even though late, are no less warm and sincere. Thanks to the divine Goodness for all the graces you have received and profited from so much! Thanks to our good Immaculate Mother who has always been such a good Mother from Notre Dame de l'Osier to Our Lady of Lourdes in America. *Ad multos annos*. What a joy to hear you say: what marvelous things our Immaculate Mother is doing there. Pray there for me and our dear Missions: a special grace is the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I will meet you in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and at Mary Immaculate's feet. Brotherly greetings to all our dear Fathers and Brothers, all sons of Bishop de Mazenod, Oblates of Mary Immaculate, who are in your country.

Your old friend and brother in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate,

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

**47 - [To Father Cassien Augier, Superior General].<sup>82</sup>**

*New Year's greetings. Trust in God, at the evening of life. Aware of many imperfections.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Roma, Basutoland, January 8, 1906.

Very reverend and dear Father,

With all my heart I come to wish you a Happy New Year, good health and paradise at the end of your days. May the Sacred Heart of our divine Master pour into your heart the treasures of grace which he had marked out for you so that you may reach great perfection. May he always be with you in a special way to console and strengthen you in the midst of these evil times. Thank you for all the care that you have for us all and for each of us in particular. What a beautiful crown the good Lord will give you in heaven for the one of thorns which encircles your venerable head as Superior General! I pray for you and the devoted members of the Administration every day at Holy Mass and during the holy Rosary. I wish these venerable Fathers a Happy New Year as well. We are pleased to think of you and your sorrows and joys.

As for your poor servant, you know that he will soon enter his 75th year, in March. Thus he has finished his race: barring accidents, he probably has one or two more years. He is not disappointed about that, on the contrary. Only he says: *Utinam bene* in regard to his whole life! Pray to the good Lord that he take me in his greatest mercy. I have no more interest in this world; I have only one desire, that of loving and promoting love for the Sacred Heart. Often I still have proud thoughts, and use boastful words. I lack a lively and affectionate faith in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I often say the prayer of the man in the gospel: I believe Lord, but help my unbelief.

I must be a burden to my brothers because of my taciturnity; nevertheless, I have nothing against them or my superiors, thanks be to God. They are all so kind, too kind to me!

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<sup>82</sup> Orig.: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives.



I say the holy Rosary very carelessly, and examine myself without gain; my visits to the Blessed Virgin's altar are very lukewarm. This good Mother has been so kind to me all my life; I am really hurt to be so careless in her service in general. I pray very poorly, especially in reciting the Divine Office which I often recite in a sleepy way, even before the Blessed Sacrament. Your Paternity will multiply your prayers to obtain for me a good death in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, in the hands of my holy patron, Saint Joseph.

Many thanks for the good Fathers whom you have sent us. They will do good work, all of them are very capable and full of good will. Our dear Prefect is carrying his heavy load very well. Peace reigns everywhere among our dear Fathers. A few weeks ago, I visited the northern Missions: Sion, Gethsemane and Saint Monica. It was fraternal and fruitful visit for me. I didn't fail going to visit the graves of our dear departed, praying for them and recommending myself to their prayers.

Till we meet in God, very reverend and dear Father. Bless all of us and the works of your sons. Bless especially him who kisses your hands and feet in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

**48 - To Reverend Father Porte, O.M.I. [at Saint Paul's, Taungs, Bechuanaland].<sup>83</sup>**

*Reception the Mass and evening song book in the Sechuana language. At Christmas, 120 baptisms at Father Le Bihan's. Rarity of conversions at Roma.*

Roma, August 30, 1906.

Reverend and dear Father,

At last, I have the joy of being able to write you these few lines. I have put off writing to you for a long time to thank you for the nice little prayer book, a complete parish

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<sup>83</sup> Orig.: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives.

book in your country's language. It made me very happy because it came from you. I was also pleased to see this lovely book for your Mission. Your good Christians should be happy to be able to follow the Holy Mass and to sing Vespers in the middle of the desert where they live. I thank you with all of my heart. In Basutoland, we are still using the catechism that you had printed at Bloemfontein; yet, it is almost run out. Our dear Prefect has left for the Chapter with a young priest, Reverend Father Hugonenc. He took ship at Durban on August 17th. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate from all over have their eyes fixed on our dear and venerated delegates. I hope that our good Immaculate Mother will be with them, as she was with the Apostles, so that our dear Congregation will be renewed and restored *in Christo*. Let us already thank the good Lord for having preserved it.

Our Basutoland Missions go on as usual. Father Le Bihan who baptized 120 catechumens at Christmas, has again as many to be baptized. That's the finest Mission. You must know the old man Lekoatsa, one of the first Christians baptized at Montolivet. He just died the death of a saint on Assumption Day. He was one of the most important men in this area in regard to all chiefs. He was truly converted to Christianity. During his last years, he always had a rosary in his hand and said a great number every day. May the good Lord be praised, and Mary Immaculate as well, for all the good graces that she gave him during his life. The renowned theologian Suarez said that he would have given all his works and books for the merit of one "Ave Maria". It was he who said on his death bed "that he had never imagined how sweet it was to die".

Dear Father Porte, many of our men are before the good Lord. We have lived together many years; they have left us as we will leave the others also. Sisters Saint Paul, Saint Augustine, dear Father Deltour, Lay Brother Beck<sup>84</sup> and others. You

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<sup>84</sup> Neither the Personnel nor the Nécrology of the preceding years make any mention of a Brother Beck.

can consider that it is now my turn. We were on the point of losing good Mother Marie Joseph. She returned to health, for a space of time, no doubt. For myself, I feel that the end is coming closer and closer. I do not grieve for life; but I only hope that the Sacred Heart of Jesus may have mercy, great mercy on me. May our Immaculate Mother and Saint Joseph never stop praying for me. Do not forget me, pray for me, more than ever.

I continue to pray for you at Holy Mass. I am happy to do so. I still do a little work at the Roma Mission, but I have a good young priest to help me, you would say a vicar.

One of our Fathers (Hoffmeier)<sup>85</sup> who had been at St. Michael, Thaba Bosiu and Mathuloana, the queen of Masupha, has gone to Natal on account of his health; another to Germany, also on account of his health. And so the work had increased for those of us at Roma, not to mention the Prefect who is not here either. At Roma we are working very much on the old people: repairing, mending broken things. We also have good schools, however, where we work on what is new. We will have a little baptism on the feast of the Holy Rosary. Conversions are rare.

My greetings<sup>86</sup> to François and his family: you see them from time to time. I don't know what personnel you have, whether you have Sisters to help you. I greet everyone at your dear Mission and all your good Christians and catechumens. I greet all these precious souls who are under your direction. I greet them "in Christo" and "in Maria Immaculata". Ask them for a little prayer for an old man who loves them very much.

I am entirely yours, my dear Father, your brother and friend In the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Immaculate,

Joseph Gérard, O.M.I.

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<sup>85</sup> Ms.: Offmier.

<sup>86</sup> In Sesotho in the Ms.: *tumeliso*.

**49 - [To Very Reverend and Dear Father Lavillardière, Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate].<sup>87</sup>**

*Congratulations to the new Superior General.*

[End of 1906].

Very Reverend and dear Father,

May the good Lord be forever praised for the truly admirable care that he has taken of our dear Family. We firmly believe, more than ever, that it is immortal.

There you are, Most Reverend Father, you are its chief and have become our dear Superior General!

We join with all our dear Brothers, sons of Bishop de Mazenod, who are in every area of the world!

Our hearts overflowing with joy and affection, we all say: Long live Very Reverend Father Lavillardière! We are totally his forever!

Bless all your devoted sons and their works in Basutoland.

Most reverend and dear Father, we remain your very humble and obedient sons in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Immaculate. All of us, Fathers and Brothers of Basutoland.

**50 - [To Bishop Dontenwill, Superior General].<sup>88</sup>**

*News of the Basutoland Missions.*

(1909)

Your Lordship will be pleased to learn that the Basutoland Missions are going ahead. There are many and note-

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<sup>87</sup> Orig.: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives; this text was found among copies of Father Gérard's letters, but there is no indication that he wrote it. Father Lavillardière was chosen Superior General on September 23, 1906.

<sup>88</sup> Orig.: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives; a note without date or address, which Father Thiry filed among Bishop Augustine Dontenwill's letters; the latter was elected Superior General on September 20, 1908.

worthy baptisms everywhere. Our dear and very reverend Father Cenez has set his Prefecture on a solid foundation. All our dear Fathers are filled with zeal for their sanctification and the salvation of souls. They all love one another. I am their dean in age; they are all so kind and patient with poor Father Gérard. May the good Lord reward them for all they do for me.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

**51 - [Bishop Dontenwill, Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate].<sup>89</sup>**

*Fall from a horse. New Year's greetings. Thanks for Bishop Cenez; for the new priests, fervent Oblates; for the Visitor to come.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Roma, Basutoland, January 5, 1910.

Most reverend and dear Father Superior General.

I am happy today to present to you my New Year's wishes. I have been held up by the fall of a horse which has kept me in my room for two months. Now, I am getting better.

Please accept my good wishes, which I have already presented to Our Lord on New Year's Day and at the Christmas Masses. So, I wish Your Grace a great abundance of the joys of this blessed season, and a very happy and holy New Year. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus help and protect you, and give you the consolation of doing a lot of good for your sons who are in every part of the world. May our Immaculate Mother and Saint Joseph, our good patron, go with you everywhere, and bring you back safe and sound.

Most reverend Father, I thank you for all that you have done, especially for our Basutoland Missions. You have given us a holy Bishop and new Fathers who are good, fervent Oblates. And now our Reverend Father Visitor is coming,

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<sup>89</sup> Orig.: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives.

your other self. I greet and thank most affectionately and with the greatest respect, the members of the Administration. I dare ask for a small memento in their prayers.

Especially you, Very Reverend Father, do pray for me; you know that my life work is coming to its end. I count on your holy prayers: may the good Lord grant me that special of all graces, perseverance. No one can merit it, but through his infinite mercy he grants it to humble, persevering prayer.

I remain, with deepest respect and filial affection, Most Reverend Father, the very humble and obedient son of Your Grace, in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

## 52- [To Bishop Dontenwill, Superior General].<sup>90</sup>

*An eighty-year old's examination of conscience.*

[Roma, the beginning of 1910].

Most Reverend ...

I will begin my 80th year next March. I have read what that 80 year-old religious said and that is what I am now: listless in my exercises, especially during the Holy Office, very often sleeping even while standing up.

Now the Bishop has told me not to say the Holy Office by lamplight any more, and a few other restrictions during the day, I think.

I say Holy Mass and make my thanksgiving with very little faith. Scrupulous thoughts. For a long time, I have neglected to study theology. Negligent in doing my examinations and meditations with a method. Thoughts of pride, conceit, talking about nothing, flattery. Criticizing others, even the superior; not paying attention, not speaking ... to anyone, since I am a little scrupulous and don't talk about others; I

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<sup>90</sup> Draft: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives; Doc. Gérard I-2 notebook X, p. 1; the letter has no date but was probably written in 1910 since Father Gérard began his 80th year on March 12, 1910.

thank the good Lord for that. Few temptations of the flesh, with the good Lord's grace. Quite good modesty of the eyes, knowing that it brings peace of heart. My vows, I have kept them, with God's grace. Lack of interior charity ...

**53 - [To Very Reverend Father Scharsch O.M.I.].<sup>91</sup>**

*Wishes a good trip to the Father Visitor and to Bishop Delalle.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Roma, Basutoland, March 29, 1910.

Very reverend and dear Father Visitor,

Learning that Your Reverence is ready to leave this country, I come to greet you once more and to wish you a very happy journey.

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus protect and console you, and may our good Immaculate Mother, star of the sea, guide you and bring you safe and sound to the bosom of the family, to the arms of our Very Reverend Father General. I offer the same wishes to your very illustrious traveling companion, Bishop Delalle. A thousand thanks once again for all that Your Reverence has done for our souls and our Basutoland Missions. May the Sacred Heart divinely reward you for it.

I have prayed very often, as you had told me to do in the name of holy obedience. But what worth do my poor prayers have? But let us be confident, the good Lord does things in his own time and way. The good women who were going to the sepulcher very early on Easter morning were asking each other who would take away the big stone that closed the tomb. They arrived, it was already taken away. They had not been discouraged. The good Lord rewarded them in all kinds of ways. I do not free myself from this obligation; I will continue to pray that the most holy will of the good Lord be done and that he be glorified thereby.

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<sup>91</sup> Orig.: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives.

Dear and very reverend Father, pray for me so that I may pray better and prepare myself for a good death. I have confidence in Holy Mass. I will pray for you. Offer my most humble respects to our good Father General and his council.

I am healed from the fall I had, and can get around here and there, to work a few moments more for the good Lord's glory and to help poor souls enter in his kingdom.

Farewell, farewell, Very Reverend Father, in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Immaculate.

Your devoted and grateful son and brother,

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

**54 - [To Bishop Dontenwill, superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate].<sup>92</sup>**

*Best wishes for feast day: at Mass, all the Oblates will be cor unum et anima una on Saint Augustine's feast. Thanks for Bishop Cenez, for the visitor, Father Scharsch, and the young Fathers. A sentiment of contrition on the eve of 80 years. Father Rolland, due to illness, had to leave the wonderful Christian community he had formed.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Roma, Basutoland, August 2, 1910.

Most reverend and dear Father Superior General,

I learned with great joy about your arrival in Rome. May the Sacred Heart of our divine Master be praised forever for the divine protection he gave you during such a long trip. How many blessings and consolations Your Paternity brought down on all your sons, across the seas and on the continent.

Thus, divine Providence calls us all together for August 28 — to unite all our wishes for a Happy Feast Day. May the good Lord be praised for having kept me in this world, so that I can join all my brothers in wishing you a very happy feast of

<sup>92</sup> Orig.: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives. Bishop Dontenwill visited the North American Oblates in 1909 and 1910.



Saint Augustine, your illustrious patron. How fortunate our dear European brothers are who rejoice in your presence. We will all be *cor unum et anima una* during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Through Saint Augustine's prayers, we will implore God's goodness so that your fatherly and zealous heart may be filled with divine consolations and innumerable graces which will help you to carry the heavy and fearful burden. Oh, may the Sacred Heart of Jesus make us all good and fervent Oblates, so that you might be the happiest Superior General in this world. Oh, may the good Lord, through the intercession of our good Immaculate Mother and Saint Joseph, preserve you for a long time and still longer for the love of your sons and the happiness of our Mother, the Congregation.

I take the fine and holy opportunity to thank Your Paternity for all you have done for our Basutoland Missions. You have given a good Father, and a holy Bishop in the the person of the Bishop of Nicopolis. You have sent us such a good Father Visitor in Reverend Father Scharsch whose visit is already bearing such good fruit. You have sent us some very well formed young Fathers who will be good missionaries. Thank you, good and most reverend Father, to you and your excellent Council.

I especially recommend myself to your holy prayers and sacrifices. I am at the eve of my 80 years; may the good Lord grant me the grace of final perseverance. I admit, very good Father, that my imperfections and sins frighten me, terrify me ... but, "*cor contritum et humiliatum non despicies.*"

All our dear Fathers at Roma have an excellent spirit, it is good to live together. Good Father Rolland suffers from rheumatism; he has left a very fine Christian community that he had formed in Christian virtue. What a great grace if the good Lord would restore him to his former health. But, even now, he is gaining merit for the Missions, just like the martyrs.

Bless all your sons and their works in Basutoland. Now, most reverend and dear Father, I recommend myself especially to your holy prayers.

I am pleased to wholeheartedly call myself, in Our Lord and Immaculate Mother, the Blessed Virgin, your humble and obedient son.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

**55 - [To Father Justin Barret, in Natal].<sup>93</sup>**

*Daily preoccupation about an old friend. Admiration for his spirit of faith. Prayer that he gain the final grace. Brother and friend for eternity.*

[The end of 1910].<sup>94</sup>

Beloved and very dear Father Barret,

For some time now, because I was not receiving any more of your dear letters in which you gave such good encouragement for my soul, I have literally done nothing but think of you every day and very often during the day. Knowing your spirit of faith and your deeply religious sentiments which I have admired and which have been my encouragement, I thought that you had retired from this poor world; I don't believe that I am wrong. Consider then that I am with you at every moment, praying to the Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus, to gain the final grace for you, which you have so often recommended to me as being completely prepared and ready. That is exactly what you used to tell me when we saw the mountain peaks still a long way off.

May the Sacred Heart, which has united us so closely on earth, accept us in his infinite mercy to blessed eternity, after we have rendered our souls into the arms of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

I am always, and will always be *in aeternum*, with God's grace, your brother and old friend.

Jh. Gérard, O.M.I.

<sup>93</sup> Copy: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives.

<sup>94</sup> Father Barret died on January 11, 1911. He, along with Father Gérard and Brother Bernard, left for Africa on May 10, 1853.

**56 - [To Bishop Dontenwill, Superior General].<sup>95</sup>**

*New Year's greetings. Old age only allows continual prayer.  
Avowal of imperfections.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

[Roma, beginning of 1911].

Your Lordship and very reverend Father General,

I am happy to think that this present letter will find you in good health and enjoying the happiness of being near our Holy Father the Pope. How fitting it is for Your Lordship and our dear Congregation to be, in some way, on the rock of the Holy Church! Even though we are so far removed from the centre of our Congregation, we do not fail to feel the joys and sorrows of our holy Congregation and its head. Well! very reverend and dear Father, allow me to lose myself in the crowd of your sons, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. I dare, as they do, to offer you my very humble wishes for the New Year. I hope that this will be a good year! May the Sacred Heart keep you in good health, accord you the special graces to carry the load of your duty, and console you in the sufferings that you find therein. How many times I say, going or coming, : *Aspice Deus: et respice in faciem Christi tui*. [Ps. 83, 10]

I strive to practice the good advice you gave me last year to devote myself to continual prayer, since my age does not allow me to do more, while our good priests, with His Lordship the Bishop at their head, carry on the good fight.

I get along well with my brothers, my superior and the Bishop. I felt deep pain at the loss of our dear Father Hugonenc,<sup>96</sup> a good religious.

I reproach myself for being listless and sleepy in the recitation of the Holy Office; I do my exercises poorly. Dur-

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<sup>95</sup> Draft: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives: doc. Gérard I-12, notebook X (1911-1914), p. 9.

<sup>96</sup> Father Hugonenc died on December 2, 1910.

ing Holy Mass, I am not recollected, without adequate faith. Sometimes, the sight or thought of my past faults makes me sad or scrupulous.

I strive to meditate on that thought which helps me: *Sentite ...*

Good Father Barret, they wrote me from Natal, is going down every day.

The good Lord has given me competent superiors. What hurts me is the past ... being sick ... that cost me a little; I said nothing about it to anyone, since, with God's grace, I am not inclined to speak ill of others.

P.S. Yet a few words which will enlist you in praying very much for me. You see that I am taking great strides toward the tomb and it will be necessary to render an account to the Sovereign Judge of a whole long life, for I will be 80 in March. With the help of the good Lord and our Founder, I have kept my holy vows, but not out of love of God, but scrupulosity; I do my exercises of piety, but out of fear. I am amazed, but as in the past the good Lord has preserved me from those faults against my vows, that is because he really is infinitely good. I say my prayers poorly, especially the breviary at this time, going to sleep even when standing up. I have always lived peacefully with my brothers and superiors. I love the Bishop and my Reverend Father Superior and feel a bit of pain when ... against my superiors ... I thanked the good Lord for that, but I did not keep ...

**57 - [To Bishop Dontenwill, Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate].<sup>97</sup>**

*Good wishes for the feast of Saint Augustine. Father Pennerath succeeds Father Guilcher as superior at the Roma Mission.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Roma, August 11, 1911.

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<sup>97</sup> Orig.: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives.

Most Reverend and dear Father,

I am most happy in uniting myself to all our Fathers and Brothers in our dear Congregation to wish you a very holy and happy feast day. May Saint Augustine, your illustrious patron, obtain for you from the Sacred Heart good health and all the most precious graces desired in your heart as Bishop and Oblate.

Oh Father, so very fortunate, do not forget me in your holy prayers and sacrifices, so that I may come to the doorstep of eternity without trouble. Obtain from our Immaculate and tender Mother, the grace of all graces, that of being able to pray to her forever and ever.

Our dear, holy Bishop is in good health. Our dear Father Superior, Reverend Father Pennerath, arrived yesterday to take Father Guilcher's place. May the good Lord be praised for having sent such good Fathers to our Missions.

Countless thanks to Your Lordship and all the members of the Administration for having sent us a Father and a Brother.

I remain with deepest respect and filial affection, Your Lordship and dear Father, your very humble and obedient son.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

## 58 - [To Bishop Dontenwill, Superior General].<sup>98</sup>

*Gratitude for sending a painting. Visiting the sick.*

[1911].

Most reverend and dear Father,

Thank you for having extended your goodness so far as to send me such an interesting painting of Thabor and of the poor. Your fine words touched my heart. It is the *peto, nate, ut aspicias ad coelum*.<sup>99</sup> May Your Lordship continually pray

<sup>98</sup> Draft: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives, doc. Gérard I-12, notebook X, p. 14; there is an almost identical draft on the same piece of paper.

<sup>99</sup> 2 Macc. 7, 28.

that it may be so. I am also grateful for the great service for the parish that you obtained for me from the Holy Father.

I thank the good Lord for still giving me a little strength to help our very good Father Superior, Reverend Pennerath, in his work. We can thank the good Lord for having given us such an exceptional man in his courage and religious virtues. May the good Lord keep him with us for a long time.

My little effort: I strive to pray for the dear Congregation, its good Superior General, and, as you suggested to me, I visit the sick, the sick old men and women to have them do their Easter duty or to baptize some old women. Heart of Jesus, I trust in you. In a Mission, there is lots to do, give retreats ...

**59 - [To Bishop Dontenwill, Superior General].<sup>100</sup>**

*Thanks for a picture, for permission to say the Rosary instead of the breviary, and to always say the Mass of the Blessed Virgin or for the Dead. Visiting old people. Conversion of an old soothsayer, Sepota: a grace as a recompense for his courage, fifty years ago. Numerous baptisms. Happiness in community life.*

Roma, July 2, 1912

Most reverend and dear Father,

It is a true joy for me to come to visit you on this beautiful day of the Visitation of our good Immaculate Mother whom we love, and who loves us so tenderly as well.

I don't know how to tell you how touched I was by the great goodness you have shown me in writing me such an encouraging letter and sending with it a beautiful picture of Thabor and the scene of poor people. Thank you a thousand times for those good words which penetrated my old heart and, by the good that I felt from them, showed me that you are our good father at the same time as our General.

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<sup>100</sup> Letter published in *Missions O.M.I.*, 1912, p. 485 ff.

Thank you as well for having obtained for me the permission to say the holy Rosary in place of the breviary, and the Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin or the Mass for the Dead, according to the day, since my 82 years hinder me from following the Ordo day to day. I am very near to completing my career; I do very little work. It consists in visiting homes of old men and women who can no longer come to the Mission, so that they can make their Easter duty and to prepare them for their proximate departure for heaven. In their home I also give instructions to old pagan men and women who are far away and want to make peace with the good Lord. Just recently, it was the turn for an old man of 70 or 80 years who made his first communion. After having fought against grace for a long time, he accepted a medal of Saint Benedict and was converted. We often use this method which God crowns with success.

Last week, a pagan sent his oldest daughter — an excellent Catholic — to call us to him to “take away his sins and baptize him”. Since he is at least as old as I, I went to instruct him at his home. His wife, still living, also wants to be converted. I hope very much that this conversion of a Letebele like “Sepota” — the old man’s name — will bring on others.<sup>101</sup> This man who was converted after 50 years of waiting is not unknown to us. In fact, in Basutoland there are many Blacks that we call Matebele. Their language is like that of the Zulus, which also resembles the Sesotho language. Very difficult to convert, but once converted, they persevere. The one I am speaking about is one of those minor Matebele chiefs to whom King Moshoeshoe had recommended that they take care of his Roman missionaries. Sepota, unlike the others who did not want to receive us when we arrived in the valley of Roma, received us well and made us a gift of several baskets of grain, saying: “I am not selling it to you, I am giving it to you for food.” We were still living in a tent then and not a single soul had as yet been converted to the good Lord. In pro-

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<sup>101</sup> A Letebele (sing.) is a member of the Matebele (plur.) tribe, Zulus who had taken refuge in Lesotho during Chaka’s difficult reign.

tecting us — while the others rejected us — not only did he do an act of charity in our regard, for we lacked everything; but he also did an act of courage, since here human respect is very strong in chaining its victims. God who does not allow a cup of cold water given to his poor, to his missionaries, to go without reward, gave him, in return for his benevolence the inestimable gift of faith and opened to him the gates of heaven!

Dear and most reverend Father, how much ground has been covered in this space of fifty years! Let us thank the good Lord for it and our Immaculate Mother. The first baptismal ceremony in Basutoland included five adults and a child. Today, there are baptisms in our Missions which count sixty and sometimes eighty-five baptized. Good Father Valat at Samaria just had one of a hundred people. I believe that is the largest to have taken place in Basutoland. So, we can say with the Psalmist: *Laudate omnes gentes, laudate eum omnes populi*, since conversions are multiplying every day.

May the God of mercies bless, through the hand of your Lordship, all our dear Basothos who have in some way become your children by receiving baptism through the ministry of your sons! Bless all of us: missionaries, very zealous lay Brothers, good and worthy Sisters, but, first of all, our holy, valiant Bishop Cenez, and our Reverend Father Superior. I don't know how to tell you how happy I am to spend my last days here, for the care that is lavished on me.

Our dear Father Rolland is better. May God deign to restore his health! The beautiful Mission that he founded at Gethsemane shows what he can still do if he receives the gift to recover all his strength.

Very reverend and dear Father, the feast day of your illustrious patron, Saint Augustine is approaching. All your sons are already rejoicing in every part of the world. They are going to fervently ask that the Heart of Jesus always live in your heart in a special way, that he console and enlighten you and that he strengthen you in the government of our dear Congregation.



A little detail to finish off with.

We have here the first Zulu dictionary, composed in 1857. It says that the Zulus call the rainbow “the round house of the heavenly Queen”. You will be pleased to learn Your Lordship, that the most renowned of all the African tribes knows the name of the Blessed Virgin. May she, through her most powerful intercession, help her dear Oblates to conquer all the souls in this land for Jesus Christ Our Lord.

J. Gérard, O.M.I.

**60 - [To Bishop Dontenwill, Superior General].<sup>102</sup>**

*Feast day greetings.*

[Roma, 1912 or 1913].<sup>103</sup>

Most reverend and dear Father,

It is truly a cause of sorrow for me that I am so late in coming to wish you a happy feast of Saint Augustine. So, I hasten to you, very venerated Father, with the most sincere and filial affection. To make up for my fault, I don't think that I can do anything better than to unite myself with all your sons who are spread over all parts of the world. So, a Happy and Holy Feast Day to our very dear Father Superior General. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus grant him good, strong, lasting health, and all the graces needed for him to imitate his holy patron ... May the Sacred Heart of Jesus fortify his heart as that of Saint Augustine ... If the heart of Paul was the heart of Jesus, Saint Augustine's heart is also the heart of Jesus,<sup>104</sup> and may the heart of our very dear Father General be that too, by his humility, goodness, strength, and piety. But also, may the Sacred Heart grant him good health ...

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<sup>102</sup> Draft: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives, letters Gérard-Dontenwill.

<sup>103</sup> Father Gérard had already sent his congratulations for the Feast of Saint Augustine in 1910 (cf. letter n. 54) and in 1911 (letter n. 57)

<sup>104</sup> The Ms. erroneously has: “of Saint Augustin”.

**61 - [To Bishop Dontenwill, Superior General].<sup>105</sup>**

*Joy at Father Albini's Cause for Beatification.*

[Roma, 1913].<sup>106</sup>

Your Lordship and Most Reverend Father,

I entered our holy Congregation on May 10, 1852 by religious profession. I knew Bishop Eugene de Mazenod, our holy Founder, Reverend Father Tempier, and many of our first Fathers of holy memory. I had 3 Novice Masters who were outstanding examples: Reverend Father Santoni, a Corsican, Vandenberghe, A Dutchman,<sup>107</sup> and Father Richard.

I always heard our venerated Father Albini spoken of as a great saint, the wonderworker of Corsica. I felt great joy to hear that they are working on his Cause for Beatification. In this case, could we not say: *Vox populi, vox Dei!*

Our Congregation has grown. It has three great purposes which form the holy vocation in which our brother, Father Albini, distinguished himself by doing all of them: the mission apostolate, the formation of candidates for the altar and con-

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<sup>105</sup> Draft: Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives, doc. Gérard I-12 notebook X, p. 3 and 5. We have printed here the second of two drafts of the same letter.

<sup>106</sup> It is difficult to set a date. *Missions O.M.I.* mentioned the cause of Father Albini in almost every issue after 1897. Since it refers to the persecution may be at the beginning of the century. We have used 1913 because the draft was in the package containing letters of 1911 to 1914, and because there are three pages on the cause of Father Albini in *Missions O.M.I.* 1913, p. 186-188.

<sup>107</sup> Father Fl. Vandenberghe was Belgian. Belgium and Holland were joined from 1815 to 1830. Father Gérard wrote this letter 60 years after his novitiate. He started it on May 9, 1851, when Father J.P. Santoni was Novice Master; the latter was replaced by Father Gustave Richard in July, who signed the register for the taking of the habit until October 1852. Father Vandenberghe, who was novice master for a long time, did not replace Father Richard till November, six months after Father Gérard had left. But he was staying at N.-D. de l'Osier during the spring of 1852 and considered as a socius to the novice master (Mazenod to Richard, May 29, 1852, *Oblate Writings*, 11, p. 82), but he was at Marseilles in July 1851 (Mazenod to Bellon, July 1, 1851, *ibid.* p. 41) and during the summer of 1852 (Mazenod to Vincins, August-September 1852, *ibid.* p. 97.)

templative life, and the practice of the holy virtues which our holy Rule requires of its sons.<sup>108</sup> What a glory for our loving heavenly Mother, if one of her most zealous servants were to be recognized by Holy Church! What glory for the Blessed Virgin! That would be one of the most beautiful diamonds on the Immaculate Virgin's crown. The Most Holy Adorable Trinity and the heavenly court would thrill with joy. That would be a reward and an encouragement for his brothers in religion, so that they too would throw themselves into the holy fray of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and combat the enemies of God in these evil times when God's Church is so shamefully and excessively persecuted.

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<sup>108</sup> Father Gérard wrote at the bottom of the letter: "Our venerable Father understood [ ... ] the beauty of the three great purposes of our Congregation: to be an apostle to the poor, to form clerics who are to become apostles to the poor, to be religious striving daily for religious perfection; this vocation is as high above the Christian life as heaven is above the earth."



Bishop Eugene de Mazenod  
(1782-1861)  
Founder and  
1st Superior General  
1816-1861

Father Joseph Fabre  
(1824-1892)  
2nd Superior General  
1861-1892





Louis Soullier (1826-1897)  
3rd Superior General  
1893-1897



Cassien Augier (1845-1927)  
4th Superior General  
1898-1906



Auguste Lavillardière  
(1844-1908)  
5th Superior General  
1906-1908



Augustin Dontenwill  
(1857-1931)  
6th Superior General  
1908-1931



Bishop Jean-François Allard, O.M.I.  
(1806-1889)  
Vicar Apostolic of Natal  
[and of Lesotho]  
1850-1874



Bishop Charles Jolivet, O.M.I.  
(1826-1903)  
Vicar Apostolic of Natal 1874-1903  
[and of Lesotho]  
1874-1886



Bishop Anthony Gaughren, O.M.I.  
(1849-1901)

Vicar Apostolic of the Orange  
Free State 1886-1901  
[and of Lesotho] 1886-1894



Bishop Jules Cenez, O.M.I.  
(1865-1944)  
3rd Apostolic Prefect of Lesotho  
1898-1909  
1st Vicar Apostolic of Lesotho  
1909-1930





# **Spiritual Writings**



## Introduction

*Father Gérard left two series of spiritual writings: The Retreat Notes and Notes for reading or instruction drafts.*

*The Retreat Notes (1863-1914), written in French on sheets or separate leaflets, add up to only 127 pages. They consist of a resume of the preacher's talks, followed by personal reflections and resolutions. We are publishing a few excerpts of the reflections and resolutions.<sup>1</sup>*

*The Notes for reading and instruction drafts go from 1851 to 1914 and comprise about 2000 pages, divided into 24 notebooks.<sup>2</sup>*

*These notebooks, usually scribbled in haste, in pen or pencil, are sometimes written in French or in English, sometimes in Sesotho or even in Latin. They include notes from reading, some letter drafts, personal reflections and mainly points or outlines of ideas for the most varied instructions. These drafts and sketches which, in their conciseness, leave one to guess at the richness of ideas, jotted down in abbreviations on paper without consideration for handwriting, cannot be easily and exactly deciphered. The fine handwriting and the abbreviations, meant to save time and paper, without any publication intent, are such that it is not very useful to reproduce these embryonic texts or simple drafts.*

*We will publish here only the most readable pages which bring out some aspects of the interior life and apostolate of the Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate, the beloved apostle of the Basothos.*

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<sup>1</sup> Rome, O.M.I. Postulation Archives, Documents Gérard II-1.

<sup>2</sup> Father Fernand Thiry, as Postulator of Oblate causes, numbered these notebooks during the diocesan process in 1940-1941, and put them into a certain chronological order, assigning them letters (A to Z) to classify them. They are kept in the Postulation Archives, DG I from 1 to 12. Father Thiry, working with Father Lebreton, copied some excerpts from them for the Congregation of Rites, along with introductory commentaries for each which have inspired what we say here on the following pages.

*Some reflections made during the annual retreats may cause surprise because their pessimism and sense of guilt which sometimes borders on scrupulosity. They are explained by the deeper and more realistic self-knowledge which he acquired over the years, by his timid temperament and over sinful nature compared to God's greatness and the task to be accomplished in the midst of a pagan people.<sup>3</sup> But a double love incessantly underlies every moment of this life: love of God who in his goodness sent his Son to save mankind, and love for the Basothos to whom he himself was sent to help them understand Christ's mercy.*

Father Yvon Beaudoin, O.M.I.

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<sup>3</sup> See the explanations which were given in this matter in the last chapter of the biography which precedes this work.

N. 180. Sur les religions d'un Crétien.

Boutures & fends. III. - Semaine de Carême.

1<sup>re</sup> Coeur. Sans religion point de probité constante. Sans elle  
la religion seule peut poser la base inébranlable. Sans elle, sans  
Dieu et sans la société. Sa raison est un feu sacré. Sans elle, sans  
de la cause de sa dégradation et l'homme n'a ni d'âme, ni de conscience  
est faible. La religion seule, mais adieu de certains tentations. Sans elle  
devant laquelle notre faiblesse succombera sans cesse.

2<sup>de</sup> Coeur. Mais aussi sans probité point de religion. Sans elle, sans  
qu'un fantôme d'un monde de religion.

N. 180. Amour et crainte de la vérité.

1<sup>re</sup> Coeur. 4<sup>de</sup> Semaine après Carême.

1<sup>re</sup> Coeur. Non. Devant la vérité, non le premier, la grande  
non pas connaître non et même à non même, elle non corrige, elle  
est plus difficile à non dire elle, sans d'un geste plus généreux et plus  
de la vérité.

2<sup>de</sup> Coeur. Non. Devant la vérité, non le premier, la grande  
non pas connaître non et même à non même, elle non corrige, elle  
est plus difficile à non dire elle, sans d'un geste plus généreux et plus  
de la vérité.

The first written text of Joseph Gérard that we have: **Notes taken during the novitiate, 1851-1852.** Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-1, Notebook A.



## SPIRITUAL WRITINGS

### 1 - The Novitiate, [Notre-Dame de l'Osier, 1851-1852].<sup>4</sup>

*Nature of the novitiate of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Names of some Fathers and Brothers, examples of virtue. Invocation of Mary. Resolutions.*

I have always had an exalted idea of a novitiate. There, I told myself, a man puts off his own evil nature to take on one that is totally heavenly; there they hammer away to form hearts to virtue, charity, chasity, and zeal. There finally, is where missionaries are made, men of God who have only one idea, one love: God, and only God always!

The idea that I had of the novitiate of the Missionary Oblates of the most holy and Immaculate Virgin Mary, who wear a crucifix on their chest, was that it was there that they were fervent,<sup>5</sup> that is, boiling over with love for God and the salvation of mankind; charitable, without national prejudice, always engaging, mild, calm, in a word, as charitable as Our Lord Jesus Christ; loving Mary, our very good Mother of God and men, with an extraordinary love for they are her Oblates. That there they speak only of her virtues and the conversions she was working. Oh, what a notion I had of it! I told myself: this good Mother is honored and praised there; and so, how many graces will she not distribute!

But am I striving to make real in myself this idea of the

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<sup>4</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives. Documents Gérard I-1, notebook A., p. 36-37. He wrote notebook A during his novitiate. It has 116 pages. It begins with the analytical table of a book on religion and catholic doctrine. There are many citations from Bossuet, Bourdaloue, Massillon, Saint Bernard, etc. Here and there are some short personal notes, probably made during classes of eloquence, Holy Scripture, etc., which were given at novitiate at that time.

<sup>5</sup> Some adjectives which follow don't have the "s" in the manuscript, while others do.

novitiate? I have before my eyes saints Aloysius of Gonzaga, Stanislas Kostka and Berchmans!

O my God, what piety those priests that I knew had! A Father Dassy, Father Cumin, Father Vincens, Father Richard and all of them; and, above all, our Most Reverend and good Father Superior General! And those scholastic brothers: Logegaray,<sup>6</sup> ah! What a brother all on fire for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, for Mary and the Africans; a Brother Richard,<sup>7</sup> a Brother Silvy and all of them!

Oh really, where am I? Have I loved Mary? have I loved Jesus? That is the measure of my devotion: love of Jesus, love of Mary. My God, I am carnal, materialistic, full of distractions. I have no attraction for or confidence in Mary. Oh, nevertheless, I must change, I must break these attachments to food, the greatest obstacle that I can imagine.

Holy Virgin, my tender Mother, I recognize my blindness. I am unworthy of your beautiful Congregation, this flower garden that you have chosen for yourself, since I do not love you enough, nor Jesus, my God and your divine Son. Very well! yes, I want to love you, I want to immolate myself for your glory and that of my God. Do with me whatever you will. Help me in this resolution because, once again, I am a rebellious good-for-nothing. Oh Mary, Oh my Mother, I want to be your most faithful child! Pray, oh pray for me and I will belong completely to you and to Jesus. I promise you a great love for your Immaculate Conception and all your virtues! I will very faithfully keep in<sup>8</sup> your honor the rules that I have set for myself in the refectory. And I will go to the Office and meditation calmly, without distractions, to honor you along with God and to become a Missionary Oblate of the most holy

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<sup>6</sup> Father Gérard added, several years later: "Alas, olim." Father F. Logegaray actually left with Bishop Allard for Africa and left the Congregation only a few years after his arrival. Cf. *Oblate Writings*, 4, p. 192, 195, 200, 202, 203, 208.

<sup>7</sup> Brother Jean Richard who started his novitiate on February 13, 1850. Father Gustave Richard was Novice Master.

<sup>8</sup> Ms.: to.



and Immaculate Virgin Mary! I also promise you not to pay attention to and to look at women as little as possible, and to be very exact in all points of my daily program, and never to become angry when I am told painful things.

Your worthy servant who wishes to belong totally to Jesus and to Mary.

## **2 - The Oblate of Mary Immaculate, [Notre-Dame de l'Osier, 1852].<sup>9</sup>**

*The meaning of the name Oblate of Mary Immaculate: how to bear it worthily.*

Oblate of Mary Immaculate: this title has come down from heaven and was given to our Society by our Holy Father, Pope Leo XII, when our most Reverend Father Superior General sought the approval of some rules set down to guide a few priests who he had joined together to evangelize Provence. His Holiness asked him what he wanted to call them. They had called themselves Oblates of Saint Charles. Suddenly, as if by inspiration, the Vicar of Our Lord Jesus Christ, said: "They will not be called that, but Oblates of Mary Immaculate".<sup>10</sup> There it is a name that seems to be given us by heaven. This name touched me and struck me with inexpressible attraction. In fact, it is the essential name of Our Lord Jesus Christ: *Oblatus est quia ipse voluit* (Is. 53, 7) From eternity Our Lord Jesus Christ has continually been in a state of sacrifice and immolation for us, and on our altars he leads a life of total immolation and love; ceaselessly he offers himself as a victim to the heavenly Father to give him thanks, to adore his divine Majesty, to restrain his avenging arm and to gain graces for us. Moreover, it is the name that my good Mother

<sup>9</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives. DG I-1 notebook A, p. 53.

<sup>10</sup> An incorrect narrative. Father de Mazenod proposed this name to the Pope in his request of December 8, 1825, cf. *Missions O.M.I.*, 1952, p. 6. In his audience of December 20, he explicitly asked the Pope for the favor that the Congregation be named Oblates of Mary Immaculate; the Pope at that moment said neither "yes" nor "no", cf. *Oblate Writings*, 6, p. 220.

cherishes most: Mary Immaculate, for it is this beautiful privilege that places her so highly above angels and men and renders her so agreeable to God, who cannot tolerate the least stain in men who are called children of wrath before baptism.

The Oblate of Mary Immaculate should always keep this beautiful name before his eyes, should always be in the state of a victim who only awaits the knife of the one who offers sacrifice, and that for his own sins and those of the people he is evangelizing; then love, respect and trust in Mary who is his good Mother, his Lady; he must never forget that the knight of such a Lady must break a thousand lances to make her honored and respected. As a soldier, he has also his flag; his motto is that of my Lord Jesus Christ: *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me, pauperes evangelizantur*. That is his mission and what a mission it is! Great God! to save abandoned souls, [ ... ] souls who do not know the good Lord, the Blessed Virgin. To keep himself fit for the lofty claim of his vocation, he has only to observe his Rule: *hoc fac et vives* [Lk. 10, 28]. Everything is there. But he must not omit even one *iota* of this law of this gospel. Thus the Rule speaks of the way to meditate, to worthily say Holy Mass; it speaks of humility, the essential basic virtue. It seems to me that only the virtue of humility will save me in keeping the four vows. O, yes, only humility ... that is the virtue which will save me.

What will be my main devotion? To the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, to Saint Joseph and to my good angel. If I become strong in these things, everything will be safe, and I will arrive with God's grace, that is, to prayer, meditation and above all, humility.

I have seen during these days, on this April 20, 1952, that if I managed to be convinced of these things: that I have only one thing to do; if I were to think of only that what concerns me, considering that in a minute, a second, I might die, it seems to me that I would be a thousand times happier and I would do my exercises better, nor would I worry about anything that could happen. Along with this other resolution: that I should do every action as perfectly as possible for God. That

is the treasure. *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat* [Ph.4,13].

[ ... ] Some day I will have the joy of being an Oblate,<sup>11</sup> through God's grace and my good Mother, the Blessed Virgin. So! Oblate means a man who is immolated, a man offered as a victim to our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, for me to grasp the full meaning of this beautiful name which Our Lord Jesus Christ bears essentially, I must offer myself as a victim to the Heart of Jesus, and that continually, I must offer myself as a victim to the Heart of Jesus, and that continually and totally, for my sins and for those of others. Ah! what glory, what happiness: to be like Our Lord Jesus Christ, Our Lord Jesus Christ crucified. My God, since the world persecutes you, despises you, tramples you underfoot, grant that the world may also persecute me, despise me, and reduce me to powder so I can imitate you in everything, and that I may truly be an Oblate, your companion and disciple. Saint Francis Xavier found it to be unworthy that a Christian, for whom Jesus Christ suffered so much shame and who should always have this image before his mind, should be glad to be honored and respected by men.

[ ... ] The virtue which should typify the Oblate of Mary Immaculate<sup>12</sup> is the spirit of sacrifice. As his name indicates, he is a victim in the good Lord's hands, presented by the most pure hands of our good Mother. Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist is his model; thus, the Oblate should be like a small host in the priest's hands. Ah! Great God! what a spirit of sacrifice! You, Great Lord, my saviour, to be nothing more than a little bread! What humility! You, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, you don't even have the aspect of a man any more, of an animal! Ah! will I complain, when everyone crushes me under foot? What obedience, to leave heaven at the command of a bad priest, what mortification! [ ... ]

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<sup>11</sup> Ms.: *ibid.*, p. 55, undated.

<sup>12</sup> Ms.: *ibid.*, p. 66, undated.

### 3 - Consecration to the Sacred Heart through Mary Immaculate, [Notre-Dame de l'Osier,] May 9, 1852.<sup>13</sup>

*Act of consecration. Invocation to several saints.*

Prostrate before your holy and adorable Trinity, O God, in the presence of Mary, my good Mother, Saint Joseph, my good patron, my guardian angel, all the angels and saints, I come to consecrate myself irrevocably, for all the days of my life, to your greater glory, which I promise to promote with all my strength by sanctifying myself and in sanctifying souls.

To your Sacred Heart, O Divine Jesus, I consecrate my poor heart completely and forever, so that it may love you and you alone with all its strength; my mind so as to judge things only according to your divine wisdom; my will to do only what you wish; my body to be reduced to ashes, if necessary, for your glory.

O my Saviour, my King, receive me as your slave. I give myself completely to you. You yourself take away everything in me which could flee from your mild yoke. Open to me, O my Saviour, open to the vilest of creatures, to a miserable beast, open to me your divine heart, so that I may live in it forever! May I never leave it except to win souls for your and inflame them with your love. It is there that I wish to live, there that I wish to die!

But, what am I, an earthworm, to offer you the rubbish of my life? Of this life which belonged to you and that I have spent in iniquity. Ah! Lord, cast your eyes on your divine Mother who is also my Mother. She is the one who presents

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<sup>13</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG II-4. Father H. Thommerel, who knew Father Gérard from 1909 to 1914, testified in the process of beatification that Gérard had composed the act of consecration himself when a novice. He consecrated himself to the Sacred Heart on the eve of his oblation, cf. *Positio super virtutibus, Summarium*, p. 480 and 490. We have another act of consecration which Father Gérard made early in 1903, but it is a text composed by Blessed Margaret Mary, cf. Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-8, notebook M, pp. 1 and 3.

this oblation to you; it is her Immaculate Heart who is making it. Ah! receive me from the arms of my good Mother. Oh holy Virgin, what joy, I am your privileged child, your Oblate! Oh my Mother, I also come to consecrate myself totally to your service. Yes, my Mother, I promise you to leave nothing undone to have you loved and respected by men. Oh my Mother, accept me into the bosom of your merciful goodness. For my whole life, I vow to you love, respect, and trust as to my Mother. Oh! do not abandon me in my distress, my sufferings, and especially at the hour of my death. You know my nothingness, my wickedness, so! pray unceasingly for me, a poor sinner. And you, Oh Saint Joseph, I appoint you the guardian of my poor heart. Oh! keep this poor heart, especially in the holy virtue of purity. My God, what am I, an earthworm! How could I be pure as an angel? Oh, Saint Joseph, ask for, preserve in me the precious treasure of purity. Be my steward, my advocate with the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary!

Oh holy guardian angel, whom I have grieved so often, forgive me; I promise you fidelity; pray unceasingly for my poor soul, so that it may love the good Lord, the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph. Oh Saint Aloysius of Gonzaga, Saint Stanislas Kostka, do not abandon me, keep me pure and spotless.

Oh Saint Peter, Saint Paul, enkindle me with your charity; oh Saint John, my second patron, make me grow in love and purity. Oh Saint Charles, who are also one of my patrons, gain for me your zeal for the salvation of souls. Saint Francis Regis, Saint Francis Xavier, give me a truly missionary heart, that of a true Oblate of Mary Immaculate!

O my God, I implore you, I ask only one thing from you; give me, I implore you, the spirit of sacrifice which is the spirit of a true Oblate of Mary Immaculate. Yes, may I be a perpetual victim, consumed for your glory for the salvation of souls. Give me love for my good Mother. May I love her as I know she loves me; may I love Saint Joseph and my guardian

angel; may I be humble, mortified, charitable, that is that I desire, all that I wish. Amen.

Unworthy servant, J. Gérard.

L.J.C. et M.I.

May 9, 1852, the eve of my oblation.

#### **4 - Annual Retreat. Saint Michael, July 1, 1863.<sup>14</sup>**

*Resolutions taken during the retreat.*

*Cor mundum crea in me Deus, et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus meis [Ps.50,12].*

With God's grace, this retreat will be my conversion to the good Lord, a total change in regard to my attitude, inner murmuring, and little zeal. I have become aware of how pitiful, mean, critical, narrow-minded, and small-hearted in ministry I am. So I am taking the following resolutions:

1) I take the firm resolution not to show ill-temper, not to be taciturn any longer, to no longer grumble inside when my ideas, plans or self-will are contradicted. Besides that, I take the resolution, when this occurs, to break silence and to force myself to get rid of the ill-temper.

2) I take the resolution to be very attentive in matters of interior and exterior obedience. When the superior speaks, or proposes his way of doing something, I will prefer it to my

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<sup>14</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG II-1 A. Father Gérard wrote: "Saint Michael". is this just a simple prayer to Saint Michael or is it the place where he made the retreat? Saint Michael's Mission, near Roma, was only founded in 1868, but Father Gérard and Bishop Allard knew the spot well (Matshikeng) where the Mission would be started, even as early as 1863, and may have given the name to that place where Father Gérard was able to find a quiet spot for a retreat, or at least to write his retreat resolutions there while he was visiting some future catechumens. We will leave the word Basutoland, as Father Gérard wrote it, as it was called when it was an English protectorate, as well as the word "congregation" used in the English, Protestant sense, to refer to the community of faithful at the Mission, as we will keep the capital letters he used often, for example, for Mission, Mass, Mother and Very Reverend Father, etc.

own, that goes without saying. If someone asks for my opinion, I will give it modestly, but that is all; or sometimes, I may propose something, but if it is not adopted, I will be as content as if it had been followed. Thus I promise to renounce my self-will.

3) When I hear talk against obedience to the superior's authority, I will be careful not to take part, saying what I think if I agree, but I will show that I am not pleased, divert the conversation, remembering that I should give good example, and besides, how mean it is to criticize the actions of superiors!

4) I will more faithfully observe our Holy Rules, especially the following articles: evening confession of faults, continual recollection, (meditation and particular examen: poverty is most important; I promise to be faithful to it), preparation for Mass the evening before, firm resolution on a vice or virtue each month.

5) I take the strong resolution to be firm and resolute in the confessional and elsewhere, so as not to act against my conscience, and what is more, I promise to use my duty and my ministry to do good for the soul of my brothers or ones I am directing, even though they may see me as strict. For, being indulgent with them is to harm their soul ...

6) I take the firm resolution not to look at persons of the opposite sex out of curiosity or natural affection: never to look for the sake of looking. *Pepigi...cum oculis meis* [Job 31,1]. Oh God, have pity on my weakness, make me blind or paralyzed rather than allow me to commit any fault.

7) In gratitude for so much kindness and in reparation for so many sins of my past life, I promise to spur myself on, to sacrifice ease, rest, and timidity, in order to have Jesus Christ adored and loved, and to save souls from hell. For that is the mission of an apostle. *Cor mundum crea in me Deus, et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus meis.*

*Nota bene.* *Cor unum et anima una* [Acts 4,32] with my very dear Superior for any plans and business, etc., leaving

aside my own ideas. That is what gives strength. Very great charity towards my brothers, giving preference to their way of thinking rather than to my own; modestly proposing my own, but not clinging to it. Then help them to sanctify themselves by my example, obedience, words, especially the lay brothers, whose ministry is so distracting and who devote themselves for the priests.

Very mild and good hearted, zealous, and without rancor for the Basothos; like Saint Francis Xavier, everything to everyone to win them for Christ Jesus. Take care not to shock or scandalize them by too great hastiness or harshness; vinegar repels minds and hearts.

I must remember: *Vita sodalium Societatis nostrae perpetua debet esse animi recollectio* [Const. 1826, Chp.2 and 1, art. 1]

Not neglect short aspirations or spiritual communion with the Sacred Heart of Jesus [ ... ] with great devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Immaculate, doing everything for them, with the greatest trust. Speak countless words to the Heart of Jesus and one to people.

And above all, I must remember to be humble, extremely so, *mitis et humilis corde* [Matt.11,29]. That is the great and most necessary virtue: without it, a deplorable fall or sterility in the ministry. *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat* [Phil. 4, 12] Jesus, Mary and Joseph, forever in my heart.

I will read these resolutions, this directory, once a week and on the monthly retreat; I will examine myself on my duties as a religious priest regarding meditation and examination of conscience.

March 19, 1864.<sup>15</sup>

Today, Bishop Allard told me a very important thing: that I am not daring enough, too timid, not enterprising in winning the hearts of the Africans, especially those who seem to be the best disposed. It would be better not to know how to

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 4.



speak so well and to be more winning. That is the main point. If one does not help those who seem to have good will, their initial disposition will be blotted out and evaporate. He says that once we have a college, it will be the same; if we do not penetrate the pupils' hearts they will believe only superficially.

So, I must seriously take that to heart and face my incompetence; do not fear, pray very much, consider what one wants to say, and go ahead. Saint Joseph, pray for me, *quod possibilitas nostra non obtinet tua ... intercessione donetur*. [Prayer, March 19].

**5 - Conference to the Roma community for the monthly retreat, on the eve of the renewal of vows, February 16, 1970.<sup>16</sup>**

*We must work unceasingly to become saints. The Congregation is holy ground. Advantages of obedience. Advice for the chapter of faults.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Tomorrow's event is very important, for renewing one's vows means doing what one would if one was again at his oblation day. It is what we do on Good Friday, Easter Sunday, or Pentecost: we return to those blessed days when those great events took place, we experience what was in Jesus Christ. Tomorrow will be the day for renewing our vows, and this renewal is capable of bringing back to life in us all the graces that we received for our perfection.

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<sup>16</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-3, notebook D, pp. 24-30. Father Gérard often preached to his fellow Oblates. Here and there in his notebooks, we find drafts of his sermons or talks to Oblates. The Postulator of the Cause did not have them copied because they are almost unreadable. However, it seems fitting to publish at least one of those talks of conferences to give an idea what Father Gérard taught and his manner of speaking. We chose this text, given on February 16, 1870, of especial interest the Congregation. This time, we have a text quite well prepared but poorly written, which makes the transcription of certain sentences almost impossible.

So, what a beautiful day it will be. In an effort to help you celebrate this feast well, I asked our Lord Jesus Christ and his good Mother what I might say to you in this regard, to you dear Oblates, to you their most dear children. They inspired me to use this text: *Confortamini et agite diligenter et Dominus erit vobiscum in bonis*, and the other one from the Preface of our Holy Rules: *Serio sanctitati suae incumbere habent, instare etiam viriliter easdem vias quas tot apostoli, quas tot operarii evangelici ...*, that is, my dear Fathers, that we must work incessantly to acquire virtue, to become saints.

Yes, first of all, every saint has been inspired by this word of zeal for holiness. It was their call to arms: to work incessantly to become virtuous. Like the Roman Emperor who took as his motto: *laboremus*, or this other one: *militemus*. All the saints are those who did not spare themselves from work, who started first and persevered the longest, for example, the Blessed Virgin, Queen of holiness, who was taken up with God from her conception, and she revealed what virtues had cost her and that she had acquired them by labor: and because she had worked the hardest, she was the greatest saint; and Saint Anthony, who told himself at the beginning of his conversion: if you wish to please God, pray and work.

1 - First of all, nothing is more helpful to avoid sin and faults than to apply oneself continually to virtue. One only has to animate one's actions with good intention. David was always holy in wartime, rest was the cause of his downfalls; while Solomon was building the temple, he was a miracle of wisdom, as soon as he quit, he took to pleasure, to sin [ ... ]

2 - One must work continually, and keep one's breath to persevere in virtue, since habits are lost through inactivity or the cessation of acts. When someone does not speak a language, even his maternal tongue, he forgets it; so also, a religious who ceases his devotion to Mary, to the Blessed Sacrament, his good habits of recollection, modesty, his care in preparing meditation; he must start all over again afterwards, and it's very difficult because of graces neglected. It is a most rare miracle to see a slothful soul become fervent; one more

often sees a sinner converted.

3 - Nothing is more pleasing to God than repeated virtuous acts of patience, charity, modesty and humility. He condemns those who serve him carelessly like the unfruitful fig tree.

4 - God wishes this out of love for us, to be able to give us a greater reward. Ah! let's desire it then: *Confortamini, agite diligenter, Deus erit vobiscum in bonis*. He will fill you with good things. It is certainly painful[ ... ] Cato, seeing the Roman nobles playing on the grass, said: ah! if that were study how easy it would be! We ourselves, in the midst of our little satisfactions, small gains and praise from people, are tempted to say: ah! if that were to be virtuous, it would be easy. No, no, just as one cannot become learned while sleeping, so, one cannot become virtuous by doing nothing. But, if work is trying for you, reward will encourage you, so that the work will become easier, and you will be more generous[ ... ]

Religion is a terrain whereon one gathers ripe fruit. Look at so many saints! Our holy Institute is only a little corner of this land that is the Church. How many beautiful trees! Our holy Founder, a magnificent tree!

We have come to rest in the shade of his virtues. How many other trees have grown up or ripened beside him! You are acquainted with them. So have courage, Oblates of Mary Immaculate. This ground on which we stand is the ground of saints. We are the children of saints. Besides, this terrain is situated in the centre, facing Jesus Christ; the sun of justice sheds his rays over this vineyard. Jesus Christ is there. Springs of clear water flow there: the sacraments. Besides, it is that portion of the Church which is the best cultivated, taken care of by the holy angels [ ... ]

Some advice<sup>17</sup>

[ ... ] *Quam bonum et quam jucundum ut fratres habitare in unum* [Ps. 132,1].

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 27-30. This text follows the preceding one, dated February 16, 1870. It concerns some advice regarding the *coulpe*.

Yes, dear brothers, that is the case with good religious. Their holy house is like a sanctuary, a place of holiness and consequently, a place of happiness for joy follows holiness, bound to it like a shadow to its object. Nevertheless, if we are conscientious and speak very simply what we think, we say that we do not yet experience what the psalmist promised. Well, my dear people, having left the world and its joys behind, its vanity and pleasure, we should do all we can to make ourselves happy in as much as that is possible. We are not that yet, it is a fact. We can be, that too is a fact. We are not, that is a fact. Let's understand why. Take away these obstacles and we will surely be happy.

I would like to show you the only thing that is needed to assure your happiness in this community. It is obedience to our holy Rules and hence to our superiors. Obedience! What could be more sweet, more consoling than to know in the depths of one's heart that one is doing God's will! When one obeys and practices the holy rules, one can say with Jesus Christ: my food is to do the will of my Father. What could be more reassuring!

If you have been obedient, your peace will be like a river, that is, you will experience a profound and unchanging peace. Where there is no obedience, there is perplexity, anxiety and trouble. Everyone will be led to confusion by doing his own will, as Jonas was; as long as he is disobedient, he will not be on safe course, even if the vessel is guided by a capable pilot. And Jonas, once he returned to obedience, tasted sweetness and peace in the whale's belly where he composed a hymn of praise to the Lord.

It is certain that the happiness of the blessed consists in the conformity of their will with that of God. What gives them joy is that their will is in God as in a place of rest. To have tranquility in this world, we need to live in dependence on the divine will. It is especially at death that an Oblate, faithful to obedience and consequently to the divine will, experiences the sweet consolation of having submitted to it; he begins to taste some sample of the delights promised to obedient souls. This

foretaste is a sign that his happiness is near in the same way that a fresh breeze tells the pilot that he is not far from port.

Is there anything else needed to make you love obedience? Remember the two principles of this virtue: the first: that our true good, our happiness consists in doing God's will, and to obey is to do it; the second: there is no rule more infallible to knowing God's will than the will of the superiors, unless the Superior's order is an evident sin. There is no reasonable motive to withdraw you from obedience: even the revelations which might come to you ought to be less reassuring than the will of superiors.

Very well! we find there the way to true happiness, we have the secret in this verse of the psalmist: *quam bonum et quam iucundum*.

Well, here are some general and particular observations, a few rules which help to assure this happiness.

First of all, to remove all doubt from your minds, the one who is in your midst to replace the Bishop,<sup>18</sup> has the duty of superior as in all the houses. I do not have to read you the Bishop's letter; only, it should be said, your obedience will surpass in merit that which you render to our holy Bishop, for his episcopal dignity, his manner, and insights make obedience easy. Today, it is not like that, but that is when your obedience will be that much more divine.

Thus, you Brother S. recognize where the spirit, the enemy of your happiness, wishes to lead you astray. I tell you this in front of everyone, for everyone knows your case. The difficulty that you have is not a difficulty, it is only in your imagination. You wish to obey, you say, but you do not want

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<sup>18</sup> At that time Bishop Allard was in Europe to take part in the Vatican Council. Father Hidien had always complained about Bishop Allard's severity and especially about the fact that only Father Gérard had ordinary jurisdiction to hear the confessions of the faithful who were still few in number. Father Hidien persuaded Father Deltour who had just arrived in Lesotho to join with him (Letter to Father Fabre, May 31, 1870); both of them found that Father Gérard followed the absent Bishop's directives too faithfully; so we can understand that the superior felt the need to insist on obedience.

anyone to interfere in your work except the superior. Well! listen carefully: if the superior were to place a Brother or a Father in his place you would still have to obey him; since the superior can give him his powers. To be sure everyone will do what he can not to contradict you, but you cannot deny them the right they have to alert the superior about what they believe to have noticed in you or your work. What is more, would a sincere religious soul balance his soul's salvation with some hurt or some word. A religious, sincerely bound to his vocation, will tell himself: neither angels nor tribulations, nor hunger, nor death will separate me from the love of Jesus Christ. So, put your mind to this: yes, I will obey everything all who take the place of God for me.

You also, Brother Bernard, you must also be on your guard in this matter. You do not fully respect the superior, you have failed him today very seriously. How come? do you talk that way to Our Lord Jesus Christ? Do you have faith in the holy Sacrament of the altar? Here are some rules to observe:

1 - The examination of conscience will be better observed, spiritual reading will be done together either after the Rosary or before evening meditation, according to the time; for the present, do it after the Rosary in Brother Moran's room.

2 - Brother Bernard alone has charge [ ... ] of our domestic workers, to work and deal with them, and a source of discontent can come from that; he is in charge, he has the responsibility. That is the Bishop's wish. That is undoubtedly the command, the rule, so, there is no need for concern on your part. Each of you, keep to your own place in peace. The gears of a machine each follow their own path, one does not infringe on the others; otherwise there is confusion.

3 - Care of the horses belongs specifically to Brother Moran.

4 - The refectory is for Brother L. He must reread the Rule about that; keep it cleaner.

5 - No longer receive visitors in one's room; keep conversation with them to a minimum.

With the priests only:

1 - School. The Bishop's intention: take up classes again seriously: reading and English class by Father Hidien and singing class in the evening.

2 - Bible History.

3 - Catechism.

**6 - Monthly retreat in preparation for the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Village of the Mother of Jesus, August 8, 1870.<sup>19</sup>**

*Desire for holiness. Love of purity, humility, obedience. Resolutions.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

I feel a great desire to make of myself a holy missionary, adorned with all the virtues of a good Oblate of Mary Immaculate; above all, I long for devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of my good Mother! The good Lord has given me during these last days a tender love for the divine Heart: I gladly speak about this to the neophytes and catechumens. Also the virtue which my heart seems to desire the most is holy purity. I feel a great love for it, I thank the good Lord for it, sometimes out loud. Oh! what would I give to keep it always! Oh holy modesty, how I cherish you! Oh powerful guardian of purity, be ever in my eyes, ears, my whole body. My God, my Mother, I do possess it, but in a fragile vessel. Oh Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, when you see me in temptations to sin, waken in me the thought of eternity and Jesus crucified. I renew at the feet of my Mother the resolution taken a long time ago to never gaze at a woman, never to look for the sake of looking, to speak to them only when nec-

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<sup>19</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-12, notebook Z, pp. 165-166.

essary. I will do it modestly with fear and trembling. After holy purity, it is holy humility which attracts me most, and holy obedience.

I have noticed, with God's light, a great deficiency in interior spirit: a great lack of interior life. The cause: poorly-made meditation, done carelessly, as well as the evening oraison, and frequent missing of spiritual reading and holy scripture. Oh! that is why I make so little progress and that I have others progress so little too, why I am so dry, arid, destitute of good ideas. I must correct this weakness and become more interior. That is the way: *redi ad cor tuum*. I have also noticed great hesitancy and timidity in my actions and relations with others. One must be humble, distrustful of self, however, when one is the superior, one must act after consulting in prayer; not to hesitate so much.

Subject of particular examen: to do every action with reflection and purity of intention, as if it were the last of my life, under the influence and blessing of the Sacred Hearts ...

## **7 - Retreat Notes: Month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, June 2, 1872.<sup>20</sup>**

*Intentions for the month. Struggle against laziness. Resolutions.*

General intention for myself during this month: the energy of a servant according to the Heart of Jesus.

Specific intentions: 1) Conversion of pagans and the unfortunate who have fallen into heresy in Basutoland; 2) sanctification of the neophytes. The Holy Father Pope Pius IX, a good death. Repeat a thousand times over the aspirations of the Rosary of the Sacred Heart. Particular examination: on energy.

Listen, my soul: Sloth is a capital sin from which even the best intentions do not free priests. It demands a price, es-

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<sup>20</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-12, notebook Z, pp. 167-168.



pecially in moments of mission crisis to go ahead, to stimulate the indolence of others and to combat by word and work the vices which show their hideous heads. It is less troublesome to hide in a corner of ones' house and imitate the bird which hides its head under its wings at the approach of danger. One forgets that danger does not disappear because one closes his eyes, but rather increases, and in refusing to struggle against the evil at its beginning, one is condemned to fight it in less favorable circumstances when it has gained new force.<sup>21</sup>

1 - Pray continually, to say short prayers whenever I think of it, those of the Rosary of the Sacred Heart.

2 - Consider establishing a little confraternity whose goal would be to do penance and ask pardon for the sins committed in this Mission and to give a good example of Christian life, also in work.

3 - Prepare the meditation topic, as prescribed by our Holy Rules: say the Office at 4:00 o'clock and prayer at 6:30.

4 - To see especially the souls farthest behind. Goodness, kindness, patience in their regard.<sup>22</sup>

## **8 - [Reflections and resolutions, Mother of Jesus Village] 1873- 1874.<sup>23</sup>**

*First Communions: the soul finds itself carried away in a torrent of grace. Brother Bernard will be placed in charge of the school children; vocations to the clerical and religious state?*

March 25, 1873.

We have had 22 people making first communion, most of them children from the schools. We spared nothing in preparing them. The book: *Letters on First Communion* in English,

<sup>21</sup> Father Gérard seems to have taken this reflection from the *Messenger*, May, 1872.

<sup>22</sup> There follows the timetable set out for ministry, day by day, for the following six weeks.

<sup>23</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-12, notebook Z, pp. 171-172.

translated from the French, gave us many good ideas. That was providential. The ideas were new. One thought which struck me, read in Saint Leonard of Port Maurice, the apostle of the Sacred Heart, was that the soul in holy communion is like a person under a great waterfall. A torrent of graces overwhelms the soul, purifies it, changes it and, so to say, crushes it under the weight of the divinity. Oh my God, what a gentle torrent! That is why no doubt the people who go to communion come from the holy table as if they were carrying a heavy load; they bow their heads. And here, every day, at Holy Mass, my soul finds itself under this divine cataract from heaven! And I would not want to be more pure, kind, humble, charitable, zealous? What a miracle, to be under a cataract of so much love and not to love, of humility and to be full of myself!

On the following day, I saw a waterfall at the river; it was terrible and I was touched by it, I thought of other torrents, cataracts, those of the burning depths which will forever crash on the damned who fall only to rise up again and fall once again. Oh! what a din, how terrible it is, down there, below. My God, how many cries! Those poor damned souls would split into thousand pieces if they were bodies like ours at present.

But, there are also other eternal torrents, sweet, ineffable, the torrent of eternal joy which enters and possesses pure souls for heaven. There you have three very different kinds of torrents.

The children asked forgiveness from their parents and teachers at the church, after the sermon. The priest also addressed several words immediately before Communion, while holding the Blessed Sacrament in his hands. What a moment! How many tears, sighs, fear, trembling! Thus it was an Annunciation in heaven's eyes [...]

June 23, 1873, on the feast of the Sacred Heart. <sup>24</sup>

In the light and strength that I feel I was today given by

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176-177.

the Sacred Heart of my Lord and the Immaculate Heart of my Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary:

1 - I intend to carry out well the rule of the Sacred Heart[ ... ] I understand more than ever that the life of the Mission depends on that. Order, instruction in the form of catechism, a well ordered and prepared confession, diligence according to the program. A school child [...] asked through his mother that he be allowed to go to confession more often, a proof that confession does some good.

2 - I intend (an important and difficult thing), to give Brother Bernard to the school. Oh! how much good I foresee in this change: spiritual good, even a vocation for several of the children to the clerical or religious state. Great Lord, how a good school would satisfy the most adorable Heart of Jesus! This good Brother, so necessary elsewhere, will do this very well. Oh good Heart of Jesus, give us another to replace him.

3 - From now on, beginning on this holy day, we must have spiritual reading in common at 8:00 o'clock; we must make the community more religious. Our good Father Superior General wishes above all that we live the religious life. Here, the material takes up too much of the spiritual.

Oh! yes, reform: examens, readings, saying the Rosary in common as well as meditation. Before all else, we are religious.

And Mary Immaculate, I forget her too much. Mother of divine grace, good Mother so rich in blessings! What must I do, Oh Sacred Heart of Jesus, to honor your Mother, your Queen and to have her more loved and honored by the people?

Resolutions, July 19, 1874.<sup>25</sup>

1 - Observe the Holy Rules faithfully in everything, everywhere, and have them observed by those under my care.

2 - Observe the program of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. God will help me, and the Blessed Virgin will pray so that I will be able to do it.

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

3 - My mortifications with permission [ ... ] to keep the precious treasure of holy purity.

4 - To make known and loved the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Conception through confraternities. Don't forget as well to establish the devotion of the way of the Cross twice a month.

Don't forget, my soul your weakness, your inclinations to evil. Keep watch over your eyes and heart. Purity, purity, purity, humility, humility, humility.

5 - A man of order. In the pulpit, give the names of feast-days and days of devotion. Have a notebook *ad hoc*. A man of order for the community: make a general timetable.

## **9 - [Reflections and resolutions. Saint Monica]. anno Domini 1879.<sup>26</sup>**

*Lack of fervor and zeal. We teach better by catechism than by instructions. Visit the kraals more often. Examples of zeal and daring of the Oblates and Saint Paul.*

Oh God, have pity on me! have pity on the poor pagan souls! Forget my sins, do not punish the poor pagans on my account, grant me your love, zeal, the fervor of former times. Oh good Immaculate Mother, pray for me, since you see what I am like, so lacking in zeal, so timid, so full of distractions, so little recollected! Oh Saint Joseph, Oh Saint Monica, do not abandon me as I deserve to be.

1 - I must remember to teach catechism more often, it is more profitable and teaches better than an instruction. I have seen that by experience; after a simple instruction, given in understandable language, I found that they could not [ ... ] give an account of what had been said. So, a short, simple instruction at the Mass, but at the second service: catechism. We must teach; every Sunday to take a point of the catechism, and explain it by questions and answers.

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<sup>26</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-12, notebook Z, p. 1-3.

2 - I overly neglect visiting the kraals, and get discouraged too easily, I am too afraid of these poor Basothos. Even though these visits seem useless, they are not in the eyes of the good Lord, but they are very meritorious, they introduce into the minds of the Basothos the thought of God and of their souls. That stops an unjust judgment against the things of God. Some souls will profit from it, who knows? Besides, the (poor) pagan is so lax and lazy regarding his soul. One must go ahead of them to help them, and after that, they gain a little courage and strength. As in the case of Manotsi, a good woman who says that if a chapel were built at their place, she would not miss even once. So, she is almost converted; it will depend on the help we can give her. I must arm my heart with holy and strong thoughts and get out of this spiritual apathy, this laziness in zeal. O God, have mercy on me, I beg you through the holy wounds of Jesus Christ and the Immaculate Heart of my Mother.

a - Think how everywhere missionaries give their lives for souls. What incessant activity our priests carry on in America, in Ceylon, in the Diamond Fields! Poor Father Fayette<sup>26\*</sup> who just died there.

b - Think what these poor Basothos people are, even these pagans. Saint Paul did not fear kings, emperors, consuls, any more than one is afraid of an insect which must die today. He considered them like that. I also inspire myself with courage, that divine cold-bloodedness of a missionary, an apostle. When one has recommended everything to the good Lord and does everything for him and snatches souls from Satan, what is there to fear? It is Satan who makes one afraid, renders one timid; he finds that entirely to his advantage!

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<sup>26\*</sup> J.F. Fayette died on December 28, 1878 at Kimberley.

**10 - Notes of the annual retreat, March 1880.<sup>27</sup>**

*Lack of union with Jesus, little piety, no courage or zeal. One must imitate the holy Oblates, Saint Joseph.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

First instruction: our end ...

Reflections. Where am I like in regard to my soul and in regard to the souls of others? My sanctification and that of others? in regard to my ministry.

For a long time I have been in grief over myself and our poor Mission on Saint Monica.

I do not find myself the way I used to be at the Mother of Jesus Village, I am not united to God in the adorable person of Our Lord Jesus Christ. There is like a great chasm between myself and Our Lord, nevertheless, he is there, so near, everywhere, *in ipso vivimus* [ ... ] *et sumus*. [ Acts 17, 28].

As God so near, as a man at a distance of one or two feet in the Blessed Eucharist. Yes, where am I at in this? My soul does not have that peace which I have had in very trying circumstances. Little liking for meditation, for the particular and general examinations which I do by routine. Holy Mass: indifference after Holy Mass, distractions and preoccupations before and after [...] No order in my personal life. What do I do, what serious work? nothing and nothing worthwhile. Curiosity in reading, listlessness.

Neither intellectual nor manual work; where has the time gone? And with that my religious exercises very often omitted. How did that come about? (For myself: in several days I will examine the aspect of ministry). Yes, how has it come about that I am also so poor, so destitute, so far from my purpose as an Oblate? O God, enlighten me, show me the causes and the remedies. Give me strength. Oh Saint Joseph, patron of the interior life, have pity on me. Oh our Lady of Seven Sorrows, I have [ ... ] you

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<sup>27</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG II-1, B, 26 pages. We have reproduced here only pages 4-5, 18-19 and 22-24.

## Instruction: Death ...

I went to confession, and it seems to me that I told everything that has caused me the most pain and what has been most grave in my whole life from my childhood to the present day. I have made the Stations of the Cross on each of these days so that the good Lord will give me contrition and that I might start a new life. Oh Saint Joseph, my patron saint, we have already said the Vespers and the Office for your feast; one grace that I asked for, at my confessor's feet, through Saint Joseph, was that I die if I were to offend the good Lord again. So, from this day on, Saint Joseph's feast 1880, until my death, which will arrive on the day that it pleases God, possibly very soon, I ought to live a life which is a preparation for my death. Whether this be one or two years, or a month, or two weeks. *Beatus ille servus quem cum Dominus venerit invenerit vigilantem.*

I must keep in mind our holy deceased Oblate Fathers: our Founder, Bishop Semeria, Fathers Chardin, Dutertre, Leydier, Lacombe, Lagrue whom I knew well. To do that I must live my Holy Rules, their spirit which is the particular holiness of the Oblate; Holy Rules which tell us that our spirit as Oblates is the immolation of our whole person, life, comfort in life, accomplished by humility, which makes our immolation acceptable to the good Lord, along with modesty which edifies our neighbor, gives him virtue and makes religion attractive [ ... ]

March 19, after Holy Mass.

I meditated on devotion ... to Saint Joseph, my patron saint. Heart of Saint Joseph, faithful to God's graces, living in intimate union with Jesus and Mary, that is, faithful to good inspirations, to the beautiful examples he had under his eyes: he did everything, prayer, work of every kind, in union with Jesus, as the Child Jesus wished it, accepting his orders, his life from the child Jesus. Oh! what a holy life of work.

I must do the same: so united to Jesus and Mary, as Saint Joseph was, with Saint Joseph, doing everything as Saint

Joseph did, receiving my direction, my life, and encouragement from Jesus; to pray, do my reading, say Holy Mass, examine myself in union with Jesus, as Saint Joseph did. That is truly to belong to the Holy Family, in the Holy Family. One part of Saint Joseph's life was to adore, love and lavish caresses on Jesus. That is the apostolic life that I must practice: to make our good Saviour and God loved constantly by everyone: pagans, Christians, Europeans, Basothos; to imitate Saint Joseph, and his zeal at every moment, our good Jesus, my good Saviour, our good God. Those are the caresses that I must give him, lavish on him. It is in that that I have been lacking.

I have preached too loftily, too calculatingly; I must speak more simply, with more life, with more affection, with more familiarity, but one does that only when one is filled with God's spirit. I have experienced such great difficulty in speaking to people, to Sisters, Christians, Europeans, because I wanted to speak too much like an orator; since piety and God's spirit was not in me, I wanted to make up for it by something external, by well-formed sentences. I have seen Father L.<sup>28</sup>, there was a simple, familiar affectionate manner. He said everything, he touched our souls, our hearts, and made us look at ourselves. That was not some generality. Oh! how wrong I have been in that. But, once again, it could not have been otherwise for me, since I was destitute of God's spirit, with a timid heart, embarrassed [ ... ]

## **11 - Reflections and resolutions, monthly retreat, day of Epiphany, 1881.<sup>29</sup>**

*Lack of zeal. Teach more catechism. Invocations to Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.*

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<sup>28</sup> Father L.: Father Le Bihan invited Father Gérard to preach the annual retreat at the Mother of Jesus Village in 1879; Father Le Bihan himself preached there in 1880, cf. Codex historicus of Saint Monica's, March 1879.

<sup>29</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG II-1, leaflet i, 3 pages.



L.J.C. et M.I.

O Lord Jesus! Here I am all confused before you. I have long resisted your good inspirations which you still give me, whether for my sanctification or the sanctification or conversion of the poor Basothos, be they Christians, catechumens, or pagans. O my Saviour! how have I come to this point of negligence, of a halt or inactivity for the glory of your holy Name?

Oh! may I still hope for forgiveness from your infinite mercy? And, seeing so few conversions, should I not have helped some souls advance, some children in the ways of solid and enlightened virtue? to consider it a glory and honor to prepare souls as well as so many homes to receive your divine Majesty in the sacrament of your love? Especially grant forgiveness for my negligence in teaching catechism. Yes, catechism. Catechism. How necessary it is to make solid Christians who love and know their holy religion.

Oh my Saviour! It is done, today I begin, give me your holy grace, grace that will make me love madly my duty as catechist, give me this grace which is like an anointing that makes everything easy and agreeable. Oh! have mercy on me, my Saviour, I beg you through the tears of your holy Church, the sadness and anguish of so many religious chased from their holy houses in our poor France. Have mercy on me, I beg you through Mary's Immaculate Heart, our good Mother, our refuge.

O Mary Immaculate! I have in front of me the little piece of cement on which shone the magnificent apparition, the glorious apparition of your Majesty, with Saint Joseph and Saint John the Evangelist at Knock in Ireland.<sup>30</sup> I beg you, O most sweet Mother, refuge of poor sinners and of negligent priests like myself, obtain from the divine goodness the miracle of my conversion! Yes, my conversion. Change me, good Mother. That I may finally do something for the glory of your

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<sup>30</sup> The apparitions at Knock, Ireland, on Thursday, August 21, 1879. About twenty people saw Saint Joseph, Mary and Saint John the Evangelist above the church for two hours.

divine Son at the close of my days! And, I promise to my Saviour Jesus, before my good Mother Mary, Saint Joseph and Saint John, my second patron saint:

1 - To teach catechism at least three times a week, on Tuesday and Thursday and Friday, and twice on Sunday to prepare for Holy Communion, and twice for everyone. I will do it in the evening or in the morning, since the evening is also a good time, before evening prayer.

2 - I promise not to neglect any longer the spiritual and moral education of our dear school children.

3 - I promise to work harder on the translation of books as the Bishop has granted me permission to do.

4 - I promise to carry out the Holy Rule concerning confession.

## **12 - Annual Retreat, November 26, 1882.** <sup>31</sup>

*Advantages of a retreat. State of lukewarmness. Little charity. Resolutions: religious and apostolic life.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Under the protection of our Immaculate Mother, Saint Joseph, our dear patron saint, Saint John and Blessed Margaret Mary, the friends of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. <sup>32</sup>

First instruction... *Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile* [... 2 Cor. 6, 2] [p.1] These long-awaited days have come, days long wished for. How good the dear Lord is. A retreat is the greatest gift that the Heart of Jesus can give us. How great my need for it is. My soul was ready to give up: no more fervor, thoughtlessness in mind, and uneasiness in heart. There are many points on which I must seriously examine myself, other-

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<sup>31</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG II-1, M. Father Gérard wrote 14 pages of notes and resolutions during this retreat at Roma. He gave an outline of the instructions and added his examination of conscience, much of which we publish here.

<sup>32</sup> Father Gérard often used to start his notes or spiritual reflections with this or a similar invocation.

wise I am in danger of losing myself, for example, the Holy Office, the holy ministry, and concerning ministry, several important points: a serious teaching of catechism to children and adults, zeal for visiting villages with kindness, animating the whole Mission, without which everything dies, nothing can live or start to live. Also review as to how to give good direction to the neophytes, to make wise Christian decisions for their stay at the Mission on Sundays or feastdays. Oh God, where have I been? what have I been thinking? The Mission would soon perish. How many other things should I consider in regards to my soul: my meditations, examinations, Holy Mass, relationships with ... etc., etc. Can I do all that in this retreat, be converted in the full sense of the word?

Oh! Courage! What will the retreat be for me? It will be light for my soul. It will be strength for my heart, it will be water to purify me and to enlighten me as it purifies. What must I do for the retreat? I must be of good will, of generous will: *pax omnibus hominibus bonae voluntatis* [Luke 2,14] Yes, good will. I will especially pray for that. I will go to the adorable Heart of Jesus, the treasure house of all graces. I have saddened it. My heart is covered with dust, with filth. [p.2] My will is weakened, oh! so weakened, my mind is filled with darkness. Oh! yes, with darkness! But the divine Heart of Jesus will have mercy on me. *Cor contritum et humiliatum non despicies* [Ps. 50, 19] I will implore the great friends of the Heart of Jesus, Saint Joseph, my first patron saint, Saint John, my other patron, and Blessed Margaret Mary. Oh! I hope, I hope to obtain the grace of my conversion. And then, who knows this retreat might not be my last. Oh! How confounded I would be to die without having done anything for the glory of God, and the salvation of souls! What shame, that many souls could have been saved, would have been in heaven if I had worked, if I had been a zealous missionary. O God, have mercy on me! *In te Domine speravi non confundar in aeternum!* [Ps.70,1] [ ... ]

Third day: instruction on lukewarmness [ ... ] I see very clearly where I am in this regard: that a general lukewarmness

has penetrated my whole soul. In what point am I what I should be? In looking at my prayers, meditations, examinations, catechism, in considering my supervision of the neophytes, what do I see? in thinking about zeal for the conversion of pagans, in considering my monthly retreats.

I have reread in my particular examen the resolutions that I took on two occasions since my last retreat; once, on Epiphany 1881, in front of a small piece of rock from Knock and another time on the feast of the Assumption, 1881. I have failed in them also every day. What is the reason for that? Isn't it because I give myself too much to material things. A totally material life does not dispose one for study, for teaching catechism, but removes our thoughts and feelings far from ministry. Being too afraid to pile up expenditures, to ask for money from the superiors to afford some domestic help. [p.6] Since I have no lay Brothers, I must have some faithful African as a domestic to maintain and carry out the material works of the house. Because we have one of them and we cannot do without this material. Looking at the school and the Sisters, I will ask for one and this material as much as I can. I must be freer to dedicate myself entirely to ministry; to do it by intervals does not work. Besides, the Mission is the essential thing, and so I must consider that during this retreat. But another reason for this failure is lack of love for God, Our Lord, the salvation of souls, since not *laboratur ubi amatur, si laboratur labor amatur*.

#### Conference on community life.

We are called to live community life. It has great advantages, some inconveniences which are not really so due to diverse characters. Its advantages are strength: *funus triplex vix rumpitur*. [Sirach 4,12]. The Congregation's strength. In order that community life be what it should be, there must be union of minds, persons and hearts. A lively character and a slow one. One has to work on one's character which comes from God, but the good Lord does not approve of voluntary character faults. To do something with one's character and to know

how to endure all the others. Thereafter, one must strive to be loveable, which is the charitable approach that we take so that others have nothing to suffer from us, so as to make ourselves pleasing to others. This is necessary for doing good anywhere in the world. You catch more flies with an ounce of honey than with a barrel of vinegar. To convert someone, you must first of all win his heart, make yourself loved. Among the natives <sup>33</sup> nothing can be done if one does not become loveable. Win the heart to yourself, and you will gain the whole person. [p.7] In relationship to this virtue of kindness which is charity expressed outwardly, I must review myself and improve my rapport with the Basotho infidels, the neophytes, and overcome my unfortunate timidity and not allow myself to become indifferent, or prone to bad humor or a bit of haughtiness. One has to lower oneself, take the first step, speak kind words to them, but always avoiding familiarity. I do not communicate enough with the infidels, even with the neophytes. I must communicate more, that also with those men or women who are in the Mission with us. I must consider having a good approach, kind, fair, with the Fathers, even though I may not be well received.

In this regard, I must admit that I have a timid character, and thus not very communicative, fearing resistance, lectures or humiliating replies. I must look into myself, be kind, generous, as much as one can be, but in return, to speak my mind frankly, give my observations, to make felt or seen without pretense what one is to either side, what both the one and the other are, kind, fair, but not weak. Weakness in someone in charge leads to an abyss. A consultor, not a paymaster. To fear what has already happened someplace. Difficulty caused. Never ask for favors, nor make recriminations. A consultor, not a paymaster. I must look into myself, establish good relations according to our Holy Rules between the two residences. A reciprocal visit once a month. Confession and monthly retreat once at Saint Monica. Every three months each one to be

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<sup>33</sup> An English word for indigenous people.

absent from his own Mission. To change in this way in order to give people the chance to confess to whomever they wish.

Fourth day: instruction on obedience.

[p.8] In the evening I went to confession. I reviewed the major trends since my last retreat, 2 years ago, less 3 months.

Today, on the eve of the closing, I am starting to taste the delight of the retreat. Oh! if it were not for something that disturbs me in the Mission! My mind is clearer. I see better what is more fitting, and the beauty of the missionary life, my very pressing duties to give and sacrifice myself. Oh! Fathers Grollier, Léonard, and so many others, living or dead. What zeal! what holy daring, what élan: what devotedness! Oh my God, I am dumbfounded by this cloud of witnesses. Oh, will I fall into my drowsiness again? Will I lose the taste for holy prayer once more? the sense of religious life, and will I fall again into other chasms? One abyss leads to another, and then, to lose myself for eternity.

So, I must pay attention, it is a question of my eternal happiness or sorrow. I must live like an Oblate of Mary Immaculate, that is, to observe our Holy Rules. Everything is there. Everything can be found there, look at the beautiful circular of our good Father General. Today I wish to renew certain resolutions which are most important, which point out the abyss to me and will preserve me from it, if I am faithful. The love of Jesus Christ, and fear of damnation will be powerful incentives [ ... ]

[... p.10, Resolutions for apostolic life]: Now, regarding the ministry, I must consider: In the holy ministry one has to be zealous and put spirit into everything. A Mission is like a ball of snow at the foot of a mountain; you always need a hand to keep pushing it and which, in the degree that it goes higher, gets bigger and heavier. If the hand stops pushing it, it rolls down, comes apart and falls shattered at the bottom.

What zeal and life we see everywhere in our missions in America, Ceylon, and France. Look at the lives of Fathers Grollier, Léonard, Bernard. Read a little in the life of Saint

Francis de Sales, who felt, so he said, a frenzy for souls. *Zelo zelati impendar, et superimpendar pro salute vestra*: {Rules and 2 Cor. 12,15}. Formerly, I was somewhat zealous, so why not now? I have become earthly, too given to material concerns, doing too much by myself, wanting to do everything in a day; so, I neglect my spiritual reading, etc., catechism. Undoubtedly, our position is difficult, without lay Brothers and having so little help, but I must take a different approach. The essential is Mass, souls, souls, *da mihi animas!* That leads me to several reflections:

1 - Have a domestic helper for several months, 3 or 4, teach him to work and only supervise him. I must only lend myself to material concerns, not give myself to them. The essential, have a trusted domestic, and foresee the evening before or during recreation the work he is to do.

2 - Have a program, like the former one at Mother of Jesus Village, entitled: Rule for devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is needed so that one does not act by caprice. When everything is regulated, in order, one doesn't forget anything, one walks in daylight. I will make this program and follow it with God's grace, through the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Saint Joseph, Saint Margaret Mary. [p.11]

3 - In the ministry, one must be prudent, discerning, not waiting to see or become aware of the evil when it is at hand. One must know it, see it, foresee it in the germ, before it comes to light. Very often the missionary sees the scandal when it has already happened or is done, for example, defections, apostasies, and public sins. If he had been more discerning and vigilant, he would have seen the beginnings of these defections, of these adulterous fornications, and he could have been able to stop the unfortunate men and women on the fatal slope. Sometimes the missionary sees something, something that is a beginning, he thinks that it is not serious, so he says nothing, he is silent at times from shame, timidity, too much prudence. Afterwards, he sees that it was real. What he had seen was the beginning of the tragedy. Alas, I have seen that by experience, and may the good Lord spare me from see-

ing it again. Especially when it is a question of relations between men and women or girls. Poor nature, how weak it is, how sly the demon is. It is better to be troublesome and lack a bit of prudence in the other direction which is to warn, to ask at times, saying: "maybe I am wrong, but I think that I notice that this or that is not Christian, others may be scandalized, don't act like that." If there is nothing, the person will not be offended, and will see my frankness and charity for him. But there are relationships that strike everyone and appear suspect, dangerous or evil. Oh, God, last year at this time I was here at Roma. I was very uneasy. This year I am still like that for a similar reason. That leads me to make a reflection which is very important; it is a matter of life or death for the Mission. [p.12]

4 - The point which is so important and vital is this: One has to be clear sighted and prudent in zeal. One must also be bold in one's zeal. I think that there are hypocrites among the Basothos who hide their evil disposition, especially their impure passions, and they will try to bring down people who are innocent or who want to be. Oh, how unfortunate to have people like that in a Mission, and there will be some if one is too kind, indulgent or timid. These people will ally Jesus Christ with Satan for a time and after they will not hold firm but will throw off the mask of hypocrisy. So, it is not enough to be foresighted or prudent, one must be daring, fear nothing, not be afraid to say what one thinks or fears. Of what use is foresight if one is timid or lets himself be taken advantage of [ ... ]

### **13 - Monthly retreat, September 28, 1883, on the eve of Saint Michael.<sup>34</sup>**

*Recollections of Saint Michael's Mission. How to be courageous in the ministry.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

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<sup>34</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-12, notebook Z, p. 4-6.



*Quis ut Deus?* This feast brings to mind most beautiful and sweet memories. Bishop Allard loved Saint Michael so much. They would receive him in procession when he came to the feast.<sup>35</sup> He spoke so well about it. And then at Saint Michael's I saw so many good things, good conversions. They prayed so well. Furthermore, it was at Saint Michael that we suffered a lot. The devil stole some beautiful souls from us, the first fruits of the Mission. So, where am I at in all of this now? The lack of lay Brothers and the need to busy myself with material things does me a lot of harm and makes me materialistic, earthly. what preoccupations? Am I still an Oblate of Mary Immaculate? Oh my God, forgive me. There is no more taste for the spiritual in me, that desire for souls, the desire to see Jesus Christ loved as he was in former times. Consequently the Mission, the good Lord's work, conversions, progress, perfection, everything is at a stand-still.

Thus, consider several measures; besides, there is in me too much timidity, fear in regard to the people, especially Europeans. I must speak more frankly, go straight to the point, v.g. with the (pagan) sick people, not fear to say: you see very well that you are seriously sick. Or better: prepare yourself to depart and to be well received by God, since I do not want to fool you, you are very sick and to where we go we do not return from: one goes to heaven or hell forever. Get ready, it is not hard; you are still in a position to become God's friend.

I must speak frankly, and God will help and bless me. Besides, when one really has love for God in one's heart, it's easy to say anything. More frankness with the pagans; one cannot see them every day; tell them clearly that religion is the only way, it is a matter of the things of the God, our Father, our Master and our Life.

Say that one must act quickly, for the opportunity will pass and may not come again. One does not miss the mail, the train; do quickly what can be done now.

<sup>35</sup> This is Saint Michael's Mission, near Roma, cf. M. Ferragne, *Au pays des Basotho, les 100 ans de la Mission St-Michel* (1868-1968), 2 vols.

More frankness with the Europeans, who are indifferent, indolent, half-Protestant; tell them: that is not the way to serve God or work for heaven. You are doing nothing to avoid hell, you will go there; you are doing nothing for heaven, you will not go there. Your salvation, your salvation, take care! A Catholic of good will can walk two hours every month for his soul. It's disgraceful.

Oh Saint Michael, pray for me.

#### 14 - Annual retreat, December 17, 1883.<sup>36</sup>

*Preparation for death. Seriousness of sin. Importance of the particular examen. Vanity of worldly things.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Under the auspices of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Saint Joseph, Blessed Margaret Mary and Saint John the Evangelist, I begin this retreat for the salvation of my own soul and that of others, December 17, 1883.

First meditation or consideration: *venite seorsum*.

... Let's take the firm resolution to make this retreat well. As though it were the last of my life. Death is all around us. One more scourge, this ruin is the small pox which is here and can spread everywhere. What happiness if I were to make a good retreat. Father Detertre<sup>37</sup> always feared death and that very much. But he made a retreat, a good retreat. Some time later he was struck down ill. The fears changed into great joy. The Bishop<sup>38</sup> told him: but you may get better; he replied: don't say that, I just made my retreat and have not yet broken my resolutions. It is the best time to die. *Beati ... qui in Domino moriuntur* [Apoc.14,13]

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<sup>36</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG II-1, leaflet G. A four-page résumé of the instructions; we are publishing only several excerpts in which Father Gérard reviews his life.

<sup>37</sup> Father F.X. Dutertre died on February 5, 1862, at Liverpool.

<sup>38</sup> Bishop Charles C. Jolivet, superior at Liverpool at that time; named Apostolic Vicar of Natal on September 13, 1874.

Second, on sin. First day.

Oh my God, once again, can I still deliberately offend you? Oh my God, can I still be indifferent and not work with my whole strength to spend my whole life to stop even one sin! Oh! yes, my soul, think, think about that often. May I die at my duty, of fatigue, may I die filled with reproaches, and rejection, working to hinder even one sin. Oh! to prevent even one sin, that must be a great thing in God's eyes, in those of the Blessed Virgin, the angels and saints. May all my instructions and catechism lessons end with *fili mi, venite, docebo vos timorem Dei* ... [Ps. 33,12]

So, I must be eager to prevent it, eager to destroy it, pursue it in the poor souls which give it lodging! It must certainly be cast out, O God, by a good examination of conscience, a good confession.

Conference: *tu quis es?*

... To know oneself, a rare knowledge. They are talking about our faults for 100 leagues around and we are not aware of them ourselves. That comes from a defective particular examen. We do it, but we do it as a way of fulfilling a duty by routine. One scarcely knows what topic he is examining himself on. One goes from one topic to another without finishing any. One stays the same forever, years and years pass, and one is always the same. One must pay full attention to this. It is the most important exercise. *Quis es tu?* That is a great flaw and I certainly have it. Oh! what negligence, Oh God. For a long time I have wanted to have Rodriguez and to copy a subject for particular examen. That is a great lack, for by not making the examen well, a person does not know himself, does not see himself, consequently, does not correct himself. If I had been assiduous in making this examen, I would not have fallen and stayed in a certain fault: tepidity, lack of zeal for the salvation of souls, lack of kindness and affability in some of my relationships. A point that I did not notice, which may have been the source of great annoyance for me and others. A point which I must seriously consider.

Sixth day: let us not love the world and things in it. *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas* [Sir. 1,2]

All these things are vain, only make one happy. Oh! yes, I must keep myself far from worldly things. What good fortune, my God, for you have up to now given me a horror, a distaste for these things! ... What misfortune to be of the world, in a corrupt world, to be there at times out of duty. Oh my God, ... may I die if I were to forget it even for the slightest instant.

### 15 - Notes of the Monthly Retreat, Pentecost, May 24, 1885.<sup>39</sup>

*Prayer to the Holy Spirit for more zeal. Needs a program for ministry and religious life.*

O Holy Spirit my God, have mercy on me! I have often saddened you. Come into me, fill my poor arid heart, dry, evil, and ill, with your precious gifts in order to save me and a few souls ...

I have long wanted to change and be converted, but I always say *cras, cras*. Today: *hodie si vocem Domini audieritis, nolite obdurare corda vestra*. [Ps. 94,8] Today, the holy day of Pentecost, I say: *dixi nunc coepi*. {Ps. 76,11}

My misery is extreme, my life is null, my ministry is void. the devil is laughing. How many souls I neglect. There is disorder everywhere. I greatly desire to do good, but am powerless, lazy, I don't know what to do, timid also! I see clearly that everything is spoiling or will be spoiled. because of that. I do not instruct enough, not enough catechism, too many easily-made exhortations. Not visiting pagans; a very neglected religious life.

I need two things: 1) Order: make a program, entitled: program for devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as when I was at Roma, a program to guide my work. Visits to the Whites in the district, service at Ficksburg. Visit to the neighboring

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<sup>39</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-12, notebook 7, p. 182-184.

kraals or to other places where there are some Catholics, as Matube. A program to guide services for the catechumens and Christians during the week ... 2) finally, what I need is a religious life, to observe our Holy Rules ... Oh my God, where am I at in this? What a life of activity! Have mercy on me. Oh Spirit of my God, enlighten me, strengthen me, bring me back to the holy truth of the right road. How many good examples I have before me of true Oblates, zealous men!

## 16 - Annual Retreat, [Summer] 1886.<sup>40</sup>

*Importance of this retreat. Fear and tepidity. To be loved and do good, one must love. Confession. Humility. Holiness. Mary.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Under the protection of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Saint Joseph, my good patron saint, Blessed Margaret Mary, lover of the Sacred Heart, and Saint John, the beloved disciple of the Sacred Heart, I am making this retreat for the salvation of my soul, to prepare myself for death, and indirectly, I am making it for the salvation of the souls which the good Lord wishes to save through my work, prayers and sacrifices.

First day or eve of the retreat: *Cujus est haec inscriptio?*  
[Mark 12,16]

A retreat, the most precious grace of the Heart of Jesus for religious, a multiple grace ... a rare grace. To make it well, remember the greatness of our soul. *Cujus est haec inscriptio?*

Created in God's image, in his likeness. What is my present condition? Mind, will, heart. Evil is in the heart. I understand, I want that which is beautiful and good, but my heart is weak. *Deteriora sequor*. Poor heart, so weak, vacillating al-

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<sup>40</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG II-1, leaflet F. There are five pages which resume the conferences and add personal reflections; we give only the latter here. These notes have no date. From the context, they are certainly from July-August, 1886. Preacher was Father Deltour, the Superior at Roma.

ways. In my heart: pride, envy, jealousy, bad inclinations, vanity and flightiness. How poor it is. Oh God, have I fulfilled the commandment, the first of all precepts: you will love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength? Little love if I have a spark of it! Looking at my prayers, my Office, the Blessed Virgin, zeal for souls, fear of sin, for myself and for my flock. O God, where am I in this matter? Oh! truly, the retreat has come too late: 2 years and a half! Is there still hope for me? The Sacred Heart of Jesus is there. I will cast myself there with shame but with trust. My good Immaculate Mother will pray for me and my patron saints will do so also ...

Second day: *Dilexi te ab aeterno et attraxi te miserans.* [Jer.31,3} Our vocation to religious life is totally gratuitous: *attraxi te miserans.* The grandeur of the religious vocation, its sublimity and joy. The whole day like being lost on the road! I do not yet see where I am at; stayed a long time before the Blessed Sacrament, with distraction and little love. Vague, I search a little. I see that it is my fault. I have saddened the Sacred Heart of Jesus so much through my negligence. I read with interest the life of the Curé of Ars.

I made the Way of the Cross, but coldly, without feeling. I listened with interest, and that restored my courage, to the conversion of Tshopo the son of Moshoeshoe, about his last moments and burial at Thaba Bosiu by good Father Rolland, when the chiefs had stolen his body during the night. I loved the courage of this good Father and his boldness.<sup>41</sup> That is

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<sup>41</sup> Tshopo, one of Moshoeshoe's many sons, was chief of Korokoro. He died in 1886, at 45 years of age, after several months of illness. The Fathers at Roma had visited him several times. He asked for Baptism which was given him by Father Rolland who had just come to Roma and helped by Sister Melanie, one of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux. They planned to bury him in the Catholic cemetery either at Korokoro or Roma. The head chief, Letsié, decided that, since he was a son of Moshoeshoe, Tshop should be buried at Thaba Bosiu near his father. So, they secretly took his body there during the night. Father Rolland got up early in the morning, went there and presided the funeral so that the Protestant ministers who has a Mission there would not have a chance to celebrate the funeral rites, cf. Father Rolland to Bishop Jolivet, September 11, 1886, in *Missions O.M.I.* 1887, 52-56.

how things should be done, that is what I would probably not have had the thought of, or dared to do. I said that did me good and lifted my courage, because I sense that my own personal dominant fault is fear. I do not have this ease, the ability to let go that others have. I will come back to this.

Third day: Who falls in small matters will little by little fall in great matters.

That is especially true for religious souls, priests, missionaries, religious, and myself in particular. In our holy state, grave faults, done deliberately, are rare. It is not like in the world, but we commit a multitude of sins which can lead to perdition without our being too much aware of it.

Venial sin: completely contrary to our holy vocation, to our intention which is to tend to perfection, for nobility demands it ... It is like a spot on a beautiful painting ...

I must consider that. Little by little one can fall into mortal sin, for example, in the breviary. One can come to a very doubtful situation. It might possibly be very hard to tell if we have said it with the proper dispositions. That is my case. And negligence in holy ministry, giving absolution too easily, failing to instruct the children, or the adults. One can make an excuse, but before the good Lord? That is also my situation. We do not ask penitents to avoid the occasions of sin, or do not warn them of danger, we are not demanding enough that abstinence be kept.

I started to think about my confession. I really want to make an end of this life, this poor life of neglect and timidity, of spiritual laziness and apathy for the salvation of souls. The life of the Curé of Ars did me good, showed me what a man of God is like, a holy priest, and it taught me how one must be kind, and affable with people, the Basothos. For have I not begun to feel some repugnance and coldness for them? I have overly allowed myself to entertain a certain discouragement which says: that I am wasting my time, what good is it having Christians who are not really Christians!

Let's look at what the Curé of Ars did for his people, to enlighten and console them, to lead them to desire the highest and most difficult things, to tear them away from the tyranny of the passions and the fascination with false goods, and to have them live from the life of Jesus Christ. He used two means: preaching and prayer. Preaching: he spared no effort to prepare himself to proclaim to his listeners with strength and all possible eloquence. He did not say: to what benefit is so much preparation, these are peasants, I will know enough for them. No, he knew that souls evaluate themselves before the good Lord. He closed himself away for entire days to compose his sermons and instructions. After he had written them, alone and without a witness, he recited them as if he were in the pulpit. A good lesson for me. There is another form of preaching for a good priest: the apostolate of conversation. This foot apostolate, *sermo pedestris*, is carried out in the streets, the fields, the family home, or at the bedside of a sick person. How many souls are brought back especially when the heart helps the word. The Curé of Ars understood that he would not start to do any good to his parishioners until he was loved by them. Now there is a secret as to how to make oneself loved and that is to love. The same for the infidels, the Basothos, Matebele, etc. In seeing them, one can be disheartened and ask what can one do to convert them. The answer is found on every page of the gospel, one must love them, love them in spite of everything, love them always. The good Lord wished that the only way to do good for someone is to love him. The world belongs to him who loves it most and proves it. The Curé of Ars saw so many souls in his hands, and so many others at his feet only because he loved them so much. Oh my God, isn't that the secret for doing good to the Basothos Christians, and catechumens, even the pagans. When they praise someone they say: u bua le batho.<sup>42</sup>

I imagine a priest, a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate in a Mission. He wants to see everything with his eyes, to

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<sup>42</sup> Ms. in Sesotho: "he talks with the people."



understand with his heart, to gladden everything by his presence, and make himself all things to all men to win them for Jesus Christ. His resourceful charity knows how to use everything and thinks of everything. He is not content with those general relationships where the priest is the priest of everyone, but is not enough the priest of each person. This priest would seize the occasion to give individually to his people private and direct expressions of his esteem and devotedness so that each one would believe that he is loved uniquely by him ...<sup>43</sup>

Sixth day: *obediens factus usque ad mortem* [Ph. 2, 8]. The grandeur of this virtue. Its qualities.

It was Sunday: attendance at the Mass for the faithful, well served by the well-behaved choir boys, etc. Where are ours at Saint Monica? I must consider giving more splendor to the ceremonies, having chant taught, preparing several choir boys, and the blessing of bread at least at every major feast. Those things bind one to the faith and religion.

In the afternoon, I thought about going to confession. Certain fears of embarrassing the priest, but I certainly needed it. I will strive especially to increase my contrition, and I will make a review of the faults which have caused me the most grief in my missionary life. I will do it as clearly as possible so that I may be at peace.

Program of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary. First of all, I need one to put order in my work ..., since they are very diverse, now at home, now on a rather long trip, and now on visits around the Mission.

I went to confession. I had a good opportunity for I was afraid of bothering a confessor. I made it as if I was on my death bed, I think, and clarified several points. I did not expe-

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<sup>43</sup> Father Gérard, no doubt, copied this passage from a biography of the Curé of Ars: "He was open, kind, friendly with everyone, without losing his priestly dignity he could stop to meet a child on the street, greet him and talk to him with kind words and a smile."

rience the weakness of minimizing my faults. I see them better and more serious than ever. Undoubtedly that consoled me and what was said to me helped as well. He told me to cast all of that into the adorable heart of Jesus. The good Lord is infinitely kind and his mercy surpasses all our wretchedness, so I must now be calm and at peace, no longer be ashamed of all those sins forgiven very often and already expiated, so I must hope, through acts of courage ...<sup>44</sup> So I must give no further thought to all of that. It would harm my health in body and spirit. Peace and calmness are necessary for a poor missionary, what could he do without peace and calm? Besides that, I was also told, that I must look into myself regarding the Holy Office seriously, since it is a rigorous obligation. Choose a favorable time, not say it after supper because I fall asleep at the end, and give to nature the sleep it needs, getting up and going to bed on time ...

On humility.

... O God, thank you for not having given me natural talents, etc.; good riddance, opportunity the more to please you; nevertheless I see in myself a great amount of pride, self-esteem, putting myself above others, ostentation, attracting others' attention, hiding my faults, covering them up, hypocrisy, lacking simplicity with people in the world, etc. I must examine myself on that. Humility and trust in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary Immaculate. My patron saints can take care of everything. Look at our Oblate Fathers everywhere. Humility even impresses worldly people, it is the key to everything. Reading the life of the Curé of Ars did me good, instructed ...

Yes, holiness is the fruit of sacrifice. It is a death and a new life, death to the old man, rebirth to a new man in Jesus Christ; now one does not die without suffering and does not give birth without pain.

Oh my God, I understood these things better in the past than I do now. Have mercy on me, I have lost sight of them too much. Why am I so sluggish, fearful, unmortified, and

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<sup>44</sup> Ms. in English: fortitude.

morally lazy. Oh! on judgment day, how pleased we will be with our misfortunes, proud of our humiliations, rich from our sacrifices!

I have so much to do and repair in my whole conduct that I have difficulty in forming resolutions. I am afraid of making a pile of them and not being able to keep them.<sup>45</sup>

And Mary ... O Mother, my Mother whose child was God! Mother given by Jesus on the cross, Mother given to us Oblates by the Church. Surrender to Mary, she will give birth, feed, clothe and defend.

**17 - Annual Retreat 1889, under the direction of Reverend Father Soullier, Assistant General, Visitor, to prepare for the renewal of vows on February 17.<sup>46</sup>**

*The need for retreat. State of Saint Monica's Mission. Death of Brother Bernard. Spirit of the Congregation. Program. Holiness of the Congregation. Flight from the world. Tepidity. Count on God's grace. Confession.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, once more you are giving me the grace to make an annual retreat. It is one of the greatest graces that you give to religious souls. I am very preoccupied, anxious as to what can I do to profit well from it. It is such a long time since we have had this good fortune. I am aware of how much I need it! I am afraid that it may be as unfruitful as so many others. O my good Immaculate Mother, pray, pray with Saint Joseph so that I may profit from all the graces that the good Lord wishes to give me if I make it well. Another matter bothers me also, the little good that I am doing at Saint Monica and the little solidity of this good. Some people who

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<sup>45</sup> There follow two pages of resolutions on the recitation of the Office, visiting villages, catechism, preparing people for confession and communion, altar boys, personal study to give good instructions, exercises of piety, Mass, etc.

<sup>46</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG II-1, leaflet H, p. 1-20.

had faith are led astray and are lost. Are the conversions of catechumens firm? What happens to certain catechumens? Where are the true conversions? O Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us. We trust in you through Mary Immaculate and Saint Joseph. We promise to have them make retreats by groups or in general, and to form in due form the Apostolate of Prayer. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us for we are perishing! I also find the Mother of Jesus Village a little deserted on account of the death of Brother Bernard which just took place. Oh! how soon one is forgotten! However, it will be hard for me to forget that good Brother. I like to recall his life of commitment, charity and simplicity.

First instruction.

... The Reverend Father, sent by the Father of the family, has come to instill in our persons and our works the spirit of the Congregation. This spirit is the religious spirit on the interior as well as on the exterior; this retreat must restore the religious spirit, the customs of the religious life that we have given up; we have taken another direction, a false direction, so return to regularity, keep its Rules, live from its Rules, by practicing the Holy Rules: meditation, prayer, silence, mortification, the spirit of love with Our Lord, practice of meditation and the examination of conscience. Yes, the retreat is to restore the religious spirit. Our Congregation wishes it, as it has the right to this: we are its children, its glory ...

[*First day, conference on the schedule.*]

... O God, give me love to do my spiritual exercises with piety. Oh! if I had followed a schedule, I would be more peaceful, the good Lord more glorified, and more souls would be saved, instructed and well formed according to the divine Model. The Christians are what we are. Holy missionaries make holy neophytes ...

Evening talk: *Elegi vos ut eatis et multum fructum afferatis.* [John 13, 16]

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<sup>47</sup> Pierre Bernard died on January 5, 1889 at Roma, Lesotho.

... The love of Our Lord who has made us not his servants but his friends and confidants. He has entrusted us with his powers, and has placed us, rooted us in the flower-bed of the Congregation, facing the rising sun, watered with so many graces, and guarded by Mary Immaculate and Saint Joseph. This garden has already produced such beautiful fruit, our former Fathers, Father Albin and others of recognized holiness. Oh! how good Our Lord has been to us, how good he is to us in the Blessed Sacrament ...

*Second day:* morning meditation: vocation, flight from the world. We too must take a lot of precaution; pagans and those who were pagans have extreme and extraordinary weaknesses. For myself, I fear, almost tremble in the presence of persons of the opposite sex; we have so many relationships with them for a large portion of the converted people are women. O Immaculate Virgin, how good you have been to me. *O clemens, o pia, o dulcis Virgo Maria.* Always show yourself to be our Mother! Consequently, the greatest custody of the eyes, heart, hands ... The evening instruction on tepidity.

... What a catastrophe, what a scandal, what remorse, O Jesus, have me die now if, because of my negligence, tepid life, I ought to merit being rejected from your mouth and your Sacred Heart! what a misfortune to fall into sins against purity. My God, a thousand thanks that, in spite of my tepidity, you have not punished me as I merited by leaving me fall into such sins. O good Mother, Saint Joseph, Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, when you see me in temptation, inspire in me the thought of Jesus Crucified.

So, we should fear tepidity, let us return to the youth of our religious life, to the good odor of our oblation. Devotion to the Sacred Heart has the promise of making tepid people fervent. If I do my exercises of piety well, if I am faithful to meditation, and examination of conscience, spiritual reading, and monthly retreat, I will not become tepid, but more fervent. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, grant me the grace not to forget. O

Immaculate Conception of Mary, pray for me always, at every moment, even when I do not pray to you.

*Third day: conference on the Rules.*

... Let's hope, if I am faithful to my schedule and the Rules, I have the right to the good Lord's protection, and he will help me to do my ministry with souls. A single word, if the good Lord blesses it, will be more powerful than a full-day's instructions. Thus, we must count on God's all-powerful grace. Good is not worked in souls through our learning or human prudence. Oh my God, I always rely too much on my preparation and not enough on God's grace. So, do not forget that in a missionary's deep being there must be a religious. The religious person makes the missionary. If there is no religious, there is no missionary: a profound truth.

*Evening instruction.*

... I went to confession. In general, I confessed all the sins since my last retreat, two and a half years ago, and I also confessed the main faults of my past life. I did not confess them with heartfelt contrition, but with some preoccupation. Possibly, tomorrow I will make a good and perfect act of contrition; may the good Lord give me this grace through the merits of Jesus Christ, those of the Blessed Virgin, of Saint Joseph and all the saints. It is possibly my last retreat, so I must make it as if it were. Good Brother Bernard was with us last year, and was almost able to see this one, but the good Lord did not wish it ...

## **18 - Annual Retreat, February 14, 1890.<sup>48</sup>**

*Our Lord speaks to us in solitude. Recitation of the breviary. Confession, preparation for death.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

... Under the auspices of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Immaculate Heart of our good Mother, of Saint Joseph, Saint

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<sup>48</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG II-1, leaflet N, 4 pages.

John, and Blessed Margaret Mary ...

First day: *Ducam eam in solitudinem et loquar ad cor eius* [Osea 2, 14]

It is Our Lord who speaks to our soul in this way. What a great favour. Yes, in the retreat, Our Lord speaks heart to heart with each of us. What intimacy! How many things he has to say to us, the beloved of our souls, the true friend of our souls; he will speak to us about our miseries, afflictions, needs, and our necessities; he will speak to us about the sins into which we have fallen, inspire us with resolutions, speak to us about our prayers, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and the holy Rosary. How we have recited it, how we have treated him in the Holy Eucharist. The most important thing is to be very attentive to his divine voice. He will speak to us about the salvation of our souls and of those souls whom he has confided to us. He will want us to make a review of each of them, the children, the adults, the old men and women. He will ask me how I care for them, if I nourish them with the milk of doctrine during catechism, if I encourage them, if I have been devoted to make them pure and holy, if I heal them in the sacrament of penitence, if I know how to nourish them with the Blessed Eucharist, and if my concern extends to all of them: to those who are weak, to the strong, to those who are near or those who far away. What a great work there is in front of me!

Third day:

... I sought direction concerning something that is bothering me, a case. Oh! how much am I still in my imperfections as always. My goal is to take firm resolutions once again especially about my breviary, for there was little improvement again this year. I must seriously take the resolution again to say it at an opportune time: 6:00 o'clock in the evening; to say Sexte and None with the new Father<sup>49</sup> as well as Vespers and

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<sup>49</sup> Father V. Auffray was with Father Gérard in 1890-1891 at Saint Monica's and replaced by Father J. Cenez on August 15, 1891, cf. *Codex historicus* at Saint Monica's in 1890, 1891.

Complines. I must once again make a schedule for teaching catechism, for confessions announced and prepared, and for visits to Catholics who are far away.

Fourth day: on the suffering of Our Lord Jesus Christ ...

... I went to confession. That did me a great deal of good. I must now live while waiting for the great day. Bishop Allard, Father Sabon, Brother Manuel,<sup>50</sup> and good Brother Bernard have left already to enjoy their reward. That tells me clearly that my turn is coming soon! Oh my God, to go to judgment, to go to hear the judgment pronounced on my soul! of joy or terror, of life or damnation, and that will be forever.

So I must consider making good use of the little time when there is still light to make up for the past and prepare myself for the eternal future. This is what I must be attentive to. Ultimately, I must recite the Office as a reparation for the 36 years that I have said it badly. So, let's say it well,<sup>51</sup> it is our Office which is the source of abundant graces for ourselves and our Congregation.

## **19 - Annual Retreat, February 14, 1892, preached by Reverend Father Deltour.<sup>52</sup>**

*Fraternal charity in community. Weaknesses of human nature. Confession. Importance of discretion.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Second day: Conference on charity in community, on that natural tendency that one has to magnify his works and downgrade those of others. The owl which takes pride in its

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<sup>50</sup> Ms.: Emmanuel. Brother F. Manuel who died on November 8, 1888, at Durban. Father Sabon died on January 13, 1885 at Durban and Bishop Allard on September 26, 1889, in Rome.

<sup>51</sup> Ms.: Disons donc le bien. According to Father Lebreton who lived with Father Gérard, the recitation of the canonical hours caused him scruples since he often had to miss them while visiting his people on horseback, cf. copies presented to the Congregation of Rites, p. 668.

<sup>52</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG II-1, leaflet C, 8 pages, and DG I-12, notebook Z. pp. 208-209.



little ones which always remain owls like their father. We keep our own faults behind us as in a wallet, but those of others we put out in front. To criticize others means that we take little notice of our own faults. The Bishop's words to Reverend Father Superior:<sup>53</sup> "The weakness of the Fathers in Basutoland is that they prize highly<sup>54</sup> their own works and downplay those of others, even to praise the works of Protestants to the detriment of our own." The remedy for all that: I think that we should not talk so much here and there, but to be prudent in our words. We say too many things in confidence and there is nothing to be confided: everything is repeated, and all the walls speak. If one complains about the organization, even in confidence, all that will be spread to someone who doesn't have to know or who will be offended by it. If I suffer from anything whatsoever, lacking in anything whatsoever, if I suffer from someone among my brothers, I should tell it to God alone and to my major superiors. Many local superiors do not know how to use things we tell them in confidence. If I tell someone about someone having the right to speak, those to whom I told it speak of it without discretion as if to create a disagreement between myself and others. That is cruel, and displeases me. They will tell me: Oh! You have reproached us, a slander, through the Bishop! I also think that we often fail, we increase or amplify. Even though I speak very little, with the good Lord's grace, I have still spoken too much, for example, saying too often that things would have been better now if a Father Monginoux had stayed in Basutoland. That must have been reported to the Bishop, etc. So, if I usually speak very little, I still talk too much.

Fifth day of the retreat.

Yesterday, the instruction on the fall of man frightened me. So many evil deeds! Apostasies at the bat of an eye ... The past is not a guarantee for the future, purity kept for many

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<sup>53</sup> Bishop Anthony Gaughren to Father Deltour, superior at Roma. This letter has not been found.

<sup>54</sup> Ms.: it is hard to decipher this word: it may be "mousser" which means: to evaluate.

years is not a guarantee of future purity. Humility, humility, humility, mistrust of oneself, one can become a heretic or a pagan in one moment, ... someone impure or *damned*. *Cave ne cadas* ... Thus, beware, my soul. We are on the road to the great eternity and will soon be there, courage! If death is near for everyone, a *fortiori* for those who are old ...

February 16. Yesterday, after having confessed in some detail, with tears in my eyes, it still did not bring peace to my soul. Jesus hid himself from my soul, so that I might not yet taste delightful peace. May his holy will be done. Some particular point that I forgot to tell in my confession came back to me, and formed a kind of darkness. I find it difficult to explain that, and my memory plays tricks on me about a fault after my first communion. However, that particular detail which I had already confessed several years ago, did not put an end to the pain, the anguish. I did not sleep well, yet, I see that that would do me harm. There may be a bit of scrupulosity there; to cut it short, I will go back to confession, tell it again and strive to be at peace ... Mary, have mercy of my weakness, my nothingness. You, O God, whom I have offended so much, remember that your mercies are infinite, beyond my transgressions and all the sins of the world ...

**20 - Annual Retreat, March 12, 1895, under the direction of Reverend Father Augier, Visitor.<sup>55</sup>**

*Sin. Conference of the coulpe. Direction. Confession. Resolutions.*

Wednesday evening: instruction on sin.

... Oh my God, renew your spirit in me, your spirit of repentance, fear, trembling for all my past sins. Everything is there, oh! when I think of the *dies aeternae*! ... O my dear Immaculate Mother, do not cease to pray for me. Oh! when you see me in danger of sin, by your prayers stir up in me the

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<sup>55</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG II-1, leaflet H, p. 23-38.

thought of Jesus crucified and of eternity. O Saint Joseph, protect me now and at the hour of my death, especially in regard to the holy virtue of purity.

Conference of the coulpe.

People have reproached me, for which I am grateful, for not having kept to the timetable at the bell for meals, for coming late, or spending too much time in public religious services. The Prefect O. Monginoux reproached me for the same thing: no schedule, everything according to my impulses. No schedule for the children, we take them out of school for other things. The Reverend Father Prefect says that it is a matter of justice, since the school is supported by the Government.

Consequently, I must change my way of doing things: have a daily, written program for the residence and the schools, at school, in church, at work, and in the dormitory. For morning and evening prayer, set the time according to the season. I will notify the Sisters, the Brother<sup>56</sup> of that.

Reverend Father Visitor saw that the good Brother spent too much time in chapel and not enough with the children. Yes, supervision is necessary in face of the demon's incessant temptations. *Vae soli*. It is there that one gains extraordinary merits for oneself. The good Lord makes up for the joy of being in chapel with another, a more meritorious one ...

I have very much to reproach myself for not helping the Brother in his school, not visiting it, giving no help in teaching them Church music, not helping at all in teaching them to serve Holy Mass. Oh! what negligence. Those are little things that I could have done with a little effort: not helping to make a schedule for the school, which would have been easy, not helping sometimes by offering myself to supervise them during noon recreation. Could we not have said the Rosary sometimes? If we said it in common, the children, Brother and myself, in English or in Latin. Oh my God, forgive me. Jesus,

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<sup>56</sup> Brother Weimer who came to Saint Monica's in 1893, cf. Gérard to Soullier, November 30, 1893 and April 5, 1895.

have mercy. What a beautiful opportunity to do some good quite easily with a little effort!

I went for spiritual direction. Joy and freedom. Strongly encouraged to be more exact, and punctual at public services. Supervise the school ... I went to confession. Review of two years, review of the biggest sins of my life. Trust, I have done what I could. To be sure, I always remember my sins with sorrow ... However, I must have faith that they are pardoned. I must no longer torment myself with confessing them, I have confessed them as well as possible ... God be praised for his infinite mercy *In aeternum misericordias Domini cantabo* [Ps. 88, 2], but now *quid retribuam Domino ... calicem salutaris accipiam* [Ps. 115, 13]. That means: repentance, renunciation, religious life, holy innocence. Never anything against God, always everything for God. O Mary, O Mary, O Sacred Heart of Jesus, O Saint Joseph, *omnia possum in eo qui me confortat*. [Phil. 4, 13]

#### Resolutions

... Motto: never against God, always for God, after the example of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Reverend Father Augier asked me to take a good brother<sup>57</sup> with me to the Mission: I accepted with trust and charity. I hope I can be of help to him. The Father suggested: to take a look every week at the copy of what he will preach on Sunday and the catechism that he is to give; and to go where he has been to see what was done. He is to go nowhere without permission, before going and after.

See that the Christians do not experience any trouble from it. If he were to fail in some grave, external matter, to mention it to him. So, I must make a program for the residence, to guide the day from morning to night. For work, I could send him to Blessed Margaret Mary Mission on Sundays

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<sup>57</sup> Father V. Auffray was imprudent on several occasions at Saint Michael's Mission and put under the care of Father Gérard, cf. Father Auffray's letters to Fathers Monginoux and Augier in 1895, and Father Monginoux' Report, December 12, 1894. A.G.R.

and one day a week have him visit the poor people, to be serious and zealous in God for their salvation, have him visit and catechize some older people ... Oh! if this good Father wanted ...

**21 - Annual Retreat, preached by His Lordship Bishop Jolivet, before the Feast of Pentecost, 1896.<sup>58</sup>**

*A retreat that is not wanted nor appreciated enough.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Come away for a while, remove yourself far from the world. *Venite seorsum* [Mk. 6, 21] If the apostles who were in his school witnessed his miracles and heard his words, needed to hear these words from Our Lord, what greater reason has the poor missionary priest who is living in a pagan world or with weak Christians, etc. How afraid should he not be of falling from his perfection, of so much dust. Alas! the good odor is lost, the spirit of prayer and a life far from a community, situations in which you perhaps do what you want, how many things need to be reformed if a person looks at himself in the light of faith: religious exercises, Masses, ... examination of conscience, these poor examinations which, if they were well done, would make saints of us. Oh! as for myself, I have not felt deeply enough the need for them, preoccupied as I have been for some time. I even said that my visit to Natal would have been enough and that I should stay to care for the sick. But the good Lord arranged everything so that I am here at the retreat and see Bishop Jolivet again. But I can say with shame: I did not want this retreat enough, nor did I value it. However, I sense how weak I am in humility, obedience, detachment from self or the Mission where I am, etc., and in patience, the virtue of a lively faith, loving piety and openness.

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<sup>58</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG II-1, leaflet E, 2 pages. Father Baudry, the new Prefect of Basutoland sent Father Gérard to rest in March 1896 in Natal. He returned with Bishop Jolivet who gave confirmation and preached the annual retreat.

My God and my all, where am I in this matter? and that practical zeal for the salvation of souls, and that firmness together with kindness? Here again we still have innumerable failings! I therefore have a great need for this retreat. I should make it as if I were in the state in which I would like to be at the hour of death. What a consolation if I make it well, at the moment of death, I will be calm and say: at that time, I put my conscience at peace. I must make it well. It may be the last of my life. To save my soul. Oh! to save my soul ...

**22 - Excerpts from a sermon on the duties of parents, 1898 or 1899.<sup>59</sup>**

*Parents are like priests or missionaries to their children, and ought to come to Mass with them. Memories of his childhood.*

*Nota bene* [1]: Bishop de Mazenod in a pastoral letter wanted every Christian in his diocese to be like a priest on mission, to teach by word and example. Oh! if parents really considered themselves to be priests, the first missionaries to their children. Oh! if every man and woman took this duty to heart. However, it is right and reasonable, and a commandment.

*Nota bene* [2]: Morning and evening prayers: What a beautiful sight. Observing Sunday, observing Sunday! O God, O God! How many children of 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 years of age stay at home on Sunday, playing, dallying around, committing more sins that day than on others. Their fathers and mothers are at church. The mistake: not to want to be bothered by taking bigger children with the men or women. How nice it would be if groups of children came to church with their parents. How sad it is to think that these flocks of children will grow up without coming to church ...

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<sup>59</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-6, notebook J, p. 5 and 7. The text has no date but it is at the beginning of the notebook with pages dated from 1899 (p. 15), 1900 (p. 77), and 1901 (p. 79), etc. This sermon is written in Sesotho, but, the first two notes are in French and the third in Latin: "Ego memini in juventute mea ..."

*Nota bene* [3] I remember that in my youth I pastured the horses and cattle. I was alone all day long. I was afraid of the other corrupt young people. I thank you, O Sacred Heart of Jesus! During my childhood, my dear mother took very good care of me. She entrusted me to the care of a Sister named Odilia. How can I thank her enough!

**23 - Annual Retreat under the direction of Very Reverend Father Miller, Visitor, August 30, 1899, eve of the retreat.<sup>60</sup>**

*Memories of his religious profession and ordination to diaconate and priesthood.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Under the auspices of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Immaculate Heart of my dear Mother, Saint Joseph, and Blessed Margaret Mary.

... This retreat is in the name of the Congregation, in its duty and love for its children. What most beautiful days of our life, those of our priesthood and oblation. I raise my soul to look at Jesus Christ present in the Blessed Eucharist. How I savor in memory the perfume of those beautiful days of my life! One at Natal, some time or some days after our arrival: February 19, 1854.<sup>61</sup> Unspeakable joy at Holy Mass. What an impression, the same on the day of diaconate, Quasimodo Sunday 1853, at Marseilles, the day that our Founder wept so much.<sup>62</sup> What happiness on the day of my profession, May 10, 1852, at l'Osier, what love for holy vows. During this retreat I must renew myself in the spirit of my religious youth. O di-

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<sup>60</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG II-1, leaflet H, p. 39-41.

<sup>61</sup> Father Gérard sometimes wrote that he was ordained a priest on February 17, or the 18 or 19, 1854. He was ordained on February 19, 1854 in Saint Mary's Church at Pietermaritzburg. cf. Testimony of D. Hurley, Archbishop of Durban, March 31, 1952. Postulation Archives D 9 III-1.

<sup>62</sup> Father Gérard was ordained deacon on Quasimodo Sunday, April 3, 1853. This same date appears in the register of ordinations at Marseilles. Father Mouchette confirms what is said here about Bishop de Mazenod's tears on that occasion, cf. Rambert II, 634.

vine Heart of Jesus, where am I at today? ... So unmortified, often in bad humor, at times impatient when I should be patient, especially in the confessional, a well of jealousy, little love for my brothers, human considerations, worldly in my actions, prayers, piety, and very superficial in my love for the Blessed Virgin; and do I always say the name of the Sacred Heart with faith? love? examens without any gain, and meditation not sufficiently prepared, Office: sometimes falling asleep.

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me, pay my debt to the Heavenly Father by your adoration, and supplications at Holy Mass ...

## **24 - A Short Retreat of three days before the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, 1901.<sup>63</sup>**

*Retreat to prepare for death. Serenity.*

I must be very grateful to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for having given me the grace to make a short retreat at Saint Michael to prepare myself for death, for the moment of death is not the time to balance one's accounts; one must do that in advance. We do not know our tomorrow. Death is a thing filled with everlasting consequences. Thus, I made a general confession with as much recollection as I was able, for in two days I was obliged to go to Maama twice for a sick woman. In short, I was happy to take care of my soul, and to add up my accounts. It seems to me that my soul gained thereby: a certain interior joy, a rest, feeling my conscience more calm, and more strengthened. Holy absolution gave me the power to do better. I received good advice and encouragement from my confessor. I should not worry, for the good Lord is so full of mercy, Mercy itself, if one has offended God ...

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<sup>63</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-12, notebook Z, p. 46.



**25 - Prayer before preaching a retreat, March 19, 1902.<sup>64</sup>***Prayer.*

... O Heart of my Savior, what a work a retreat is, but it is yours, the Master of hearts. It is only your spirit which can give strength and unction to my words, have them echo in hearts. I will only be your mouthpiece. Tell me what is to be done and said and how to say it. May I be very convinced of the graces of the retreat, large, special ..., of the greatest need that we have of a retreat. Oh divine Majesty, your divine eyes see and pierce hearts: do they realize their vanity, weakness, fragility and baseness? Death and hell are there! What must they do to correspond with grace?

O Heart of Jesus, through the Blessed Virgin's prayers, your dear Mother, Saint Joseph, your foster father ... You cannot refuse the prayer addressed to you by Mary and Joseph for these poor souls; neither Saint John, the apostle of the divine Heart, nor Blessed Margaret Mary deny their prayers for these dear people. Bless our strategy as poor missionaries who need the retreat so much.

**26 - Exhortation for the Roma Christians, summer 1902.<sup>65</sup>***Necessity of a good confession.*

In the name of the Father who created you, in the name of the Son who redeemed you on the cross, in the name of the Holy Spirit who sanctified you, in the name of your immortal soul, listen carefully to me: many among you have walked faithfully in the way of justice during your youth, possibly you have practiced solid virtue during your adult life and after that have become tired. many have possibly never been truly Christian, up to this day; for 10, 20, 30 years they have never been well converted, are still the same, maybe even greater sinners than before; they are drunkards and as violent as ever.

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<sup>64</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-7, notebook L, p. 34.

<sup>65</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-7, notebook L, p. 89.

Oh! Jesus Christ who wept over Jerusalem, weep once more for this Mission of Roma! What should be done, dear children? Do you want to go to heaven? do you want to go into glory? make a good confession; look at the prodigal son, look at Mary Magdalene; imitate them. You are unhappy, hungry, nude, go ...

## 27 - Confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, 1903.<sup>66</sup>

*We need more zeal to promote devotion to the Sacred Heart.*

I need a veritable zeal for promoting devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Ask for it with humility and trust, through the prayers of the Blessed Virgin, Saint Joseph, Blessed Margaret Mary. Oh! how guilty I am of lacking in confidence.

Could I make a more agreeable prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus himself, to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to Saint Joseph and to Blessed Margaret Mary? Could I doubt their love for this holy confraternity, this devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus? Could I doubt their powerful intercession? That would be a serious sin and I will not commit such an error. Only, Oh Heart of Jesus, I know that for this one has to have certain abilities, of conversation, of know-how ... all the while serving you as a weak instrument ... But, divine Saviour, may I not be a shame to such a great good! Take me away, put someone else in my place.

Do little, but well, without concern for numbers. Study seriously the Archonfraternity's being and purpose. Do what I can. Little, much will come afterwards; no fruit without work.

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<sup>66</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-8, notebook M, p. 3. This text comes after some notes of February 2, 1903 and comes before some retreat notes written in September. On the first page of this notebook, Father Gérard renews his consecration to the Sacred Heart, using the formula of Blessed Margaret Mary: "I ... give and consecrate myself to the Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ, my person and life ..."

**28 - Notes and resolutions on the occasion of the death of a young man, January 16, 1904.<sup>67</sup>**

*We must prepare the faithful well for death.*

What a great misfortune! A young Christian man who made his first communion a year ago, came from among the Whites sick with dysentery for a long time. They brought him from Maseru by horseback; no sign of consciousness. The Very Reverend Father gave him Extreme Unction on the road near his village, not being able to do more. We saw him the next day, it was the same; could he hear? We gave him absolution conditionally; he died some time later.

O God, what a misfortune! Let's hope nevertheless in the infinite mercy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. How many prayers are offered in the Holy Catholic Church! More than a million times, I think, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered throughout all the nations: *ab ortu solis usque ad occasum* [Ps. 49, 1]. And Mary, our dear Mother, how many times she is called upon!

Always take the trouble to have people leave and spend time with the sick. But what a lesson for me, to show poor Christians, weak sinners ..., how one must always be ready. The time of illness is not the time to prepare. Life, one's whole life must be used faithfully for this. And besides, is there anything greater than to die and go home for eternity!

What a preparation can there be when one is sick, without strength or lucidity? Oh my God, what a lesson for me, to do all I possibly can to bring to sick people the help of Confession and Holy Communion. What a lesson for everyone. To live as a Christian all the days of our life, to keep our conscience clear ... Always to clear out the room of the sick person to give him a chance to go to confession when one believes or doubts strongly that the sick person hears. A confession in detail as much as possible does good and is necessary, even though the person cannot speak.

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<sup>67</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-8, notebook M, p. 7 and 8.

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, be with me always, with the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph in these great and solemn moments when the soul has only a moment in which it is capable of good or evil; in a moment it will be before its Judge ...

## 29 - Retreat, February 8, 1904.<sup>68</sup>

*Confession. Preparation for death by faithfulness to the Rules and to one's duty.*

Today, ... with the mercy of the loving Heart of Jesus, through the prayers of our dear Immaculate Mother, of Saint Joseph and Saint John, and of Blessed Margaret Mary, I went to confession, and explained everything to my confessor, as I would do it if I were at the gate of eternity. I hope in the infinite goodness of the good Lord, which surpasses all our sins, which asks for contrition especially when one has done all he can to make a good confession. My confessor told me the same thing that I have been told several times in past retreats, 1889, 1892, and at my ordination ... to not be worried about that. It is possibly a little cross from the Sacred Heart of Jesus

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I must finish this retreat well. The Sacred Heart of Jesus has been good to me. I am almost, without considering accidents which may happen to me, I am very near to death and judgement. To be truly wise, I must give myself completely to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, say the (little) consecration every day, with true piety, devotion, every day as if it were the last time.

I have to see seriously to my perfection through fidelity to our holy Rules, the practice of the virtues that they prescribe, especially charity, humility, obedience, fervent constant prayer, recollection, modesty. As long as I can still work, do so with dedication: visits, catechism, confession; I shall avoid being too long in the instruction. Distrust myself; see

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<sup>68</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-12, notebook Z, p. 209-210.

whether it would not be better to read a book, short dialogue — catechism like that of the Reverend Father Prefect ...

**30 - Notes for a homily on devotion to the Sacred Heart, May 6, 1904.<sup>69</sup>**

How important it is that we have a great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus ... What a good father, good mother, good friend! How much has he loved us! If we love him, our heart will be ... good, patient and merciful. If we love Jesus, we will have nothing but hatred for what is evil; evil pleasures will have no charm for us, we will be disgusted by them. These pleasures will be dirty water for us which does not quench our thirst, but increases it and leads one to death ... How good it is to be in the Heart of Jesus, to live there and how sweet it will be to die there ...

**31 - Note for a homily against present disorders: drunkenness, June 26, 1904.<sup>70</sup>**

Listen to me, you have given joy to my heart when you celebrated my jubilee; I rejoiced in the Lord, and felt a new fervor, but I cannot be silent about the sadness I feel when I see what is going on in your midst at this time. I love you, I love your immortal souls, I love my God, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and possibly that is why I am saddened and weep for your souls. What is this sin which is so evident among you: drunkenness ...<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-8, notebook N, p. 66 and 67.

<sup>70</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-8, notebook N, p. 69. Here Father is speaking about the golden jubilee of Father Gérard's priesthood which will be celebrated April 23-25, 1904. Cf. *Missions O.M.I.*, 1904, p. 353-366.

<sup>71</sup> There now follow some pages (69-72), written in French and Sesotho, to explain the nature, consequences and gravity of complete intoxication, partial intoxication and gluttony.

### 32 - Sermon for the second Sunday after Epiphany, 1905.<sup>72</sup>

*About the death of Andreas Maphetong, Sister Ernestina's father.*

This Christian was living among you, but he was dead to this world and his life was hidden in Jesus Christ. He was already dead to this world since his baptism. He did not love the world; he lived withdrawn from its celebrations, vices and vanity. He drank and ate but like a Christian; he worked like a Christian, hard to the point of suffering. He always dressed as a poor man, assiduous in his religious duties: confession and communion. Like his daughter who died at Saint Michael, his name is still revered. Andreas was kind and affectionate to all. He knew how to rejoice and to sympathize. His life was like that of Our Lord who said: "Watch and pray for you do not know the hour." He lived according to that rule; he died suddenly, but he had been preparing for a long time. We do believe that the good Lord has already received him into his glory.

What happiness for him! He is in glory, in happiness; he will rejoice forever. His works are done ... He kept the faith and the commandments. The good Lord said to him: *Euge serve ...*<sup>73</sup> Well, my children, there is a Christian that you have seen and appreciated, with whom you spoke and prayed. See then how happy he is now! Do as he did, imitate his life ...

### 33 - Annual Retreat ending on February 17, 1905.<sup>74</sup>

*Resolutions for his personal life and the ministry. Scandals.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

... We are now on the third day of the retreat. I have written nothing down, my memory is failing me; being half-asleep

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<sup>72</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-8, notebook N, p. 95-96. As usual, Father starts with: "Under the protection of the Sacred Heart ..." and adds: "A most beautiful and providential occasion, to bring out the happiness of the just who die in the Lord."

<sup>73</sup> Matt. 25, 21 "Well done, good and faithful servant ..."

<sup>74</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG II-1, leaflet D, 2 pages.

during the spiritual meditations took away all desire to do so. It is like a spiritual depression of my whole intellectual being. What I did most easily was pray. I prayed very much to the Sacred Heart and to Our Lady of Seven Sorrows. I made the Stations of the Cross twice and did penance in the refectory. The meditations and conferences touched me, for example, on tepidity, confession, preaching, study and on zeal which must be from a pure intention and accompanied by prayer. The author of the book we are reading, M. Hamon, goes deeply into the subject, leaving nothing out. An excellent book; fortunate are those who know of it.

O Sacred Heart of my divine Master, where am I at now, toward what should I direct my thoughts and resolutions? For myself, I should make a good confession in the face of death which is drawing near. I plan to recall very little from the one of last year, since I believe that I told everything with God's grace, but this year I will focus on humility, confessing this lack of virtue as the source of my sins, self-love, fear of being humiliated, and of losing esteem, etc., some other faults from my past life and forgotten: filial love, duties towards my inferiors ...

Now concerning my duties to the Christians and catechumens, scandals where public sins are like a rising tide. There are the girls lost this year and last ... And the other Christians, men and women, young boys and girls out of school! Catechumens, with not very solid or true conversions. Little faith. Many and strong temptations. Lack of prayer. No supervision by parents, poor attendance at Services, culpable especially at Holy Mass, at Benediction. A remedy must be provided seriously or everything will deteriorate. Take serious measures for attendance at the holy services. I would suggest that we give a short summary of Christian doctrine either at the beginning or end of Mass ...

It is evident, in the sight of these scandals and the immense needs of this congregation<sup>75</sup> that I must throw myself

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<sup>75</sup> Congregation in the sense of parish community.

completely into the Sacred Heart of Jesus, into the motherly arms of our kind Mother, the refuge of poor sinners; *humiliter et confidenter*. But what is to be done? ... Discuss it with the Very Reverend Father Prefect and the good Fathers of the Mission. Correct all defects in myself: in the pulpit, at catechism, in the confessional, in my individual relationships with people: for example, to be more pleasing, available for everyone (a father and his children). Goodness, affability for all young people, with no pretense whatever. While preaching, avoid big words of satire and not complain always about people. I have noticed that from time to time I use words that hurt. If I want to tell them to recommend sinners, their own, to the prayers of the Confraternity, I will not say: you are rich, you need nothing.<sup>76</sup> Often I say these words, useless! They would listen better if I said: my children, do not be afraid to ask for prayers, why not? Explain to them the attractions of the Heart of Jesus, the promises; after that, say very simply: if there are some among you who want to join the Confraternity, they may speak to me. That's easy. In the confessional, avoid reproaches. At the start, listen with kindness, patience, show your sorrow, send them away gently. For the old women, take a method, possibly the one I use now, to ask them about the main faults they have committed, that is, a short examination suitable to these good old women, with some detail however, not forgetting faults of paganism ...

Not to hesitate or evade when someone asks me to go to confession. Not to ask who wants me, since everyone has the right to ask for me. The good Lord is with me, Mary the refuge of sinners is with me. The angel and the patron of this person are saints of the good Lord. But the Lord is a good father. He is the one who sent them to me. Let's always receive them well. Would you like to go to confession? Yes, well, that's good, you are doing something good. I will strive to do everything to help you. Go, my child, to the chapel for a little

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<sup>76</sup> Father Gérard adds the Sesotho word: *le Khotse*: "You lack nothing, you have everything".



while to prepare. I will follow you there. Do not fail to greet them, to touch their hand, calling them by name ...

### **34 - The end of the retreat, February 14 and 15, 1906.<sup>77</sup>**

*Serenity after confession. Prayer for those confided to him.*

February 14.

... During this retreat, I strove to acquire great contrition for all the sins that I confessed last year, and I achieved a good and sorrowful contrition, as much as I was able. After a review of the year, I made a general confession of the sins that I confessed last year, I prayed for true contrition, and added several forgotten faults and negligences. After absolution, I felt a rather deep peace, and told myself: formerly, I was hindered by remorse and fear over my past life, now that it seems I have done all I could, I must, I tell myself, give myself completely to loving our good Master, his Sacred Heart which is so good to me, to make him loved, to live in him, for him, like him.

*Quid retribuam Domino ... Calicem ...* I must expect and desire a life of physical and moral sufferings. We notice that the saints held in horror an easy, sensual life, that they esteemed penance, mortification and a life of trials. I must not forget the principle of the spiritual life that the sure sign of a true love of God, a pure and perfect love, is the sincere and ardent desire to suffer for God.

February 15.

Oh our dear loveable Immaculate Mother, in my fear and terror for the dear souls of this Mission, for their eternal salvation, seeing so many miseries, so many needs, I confide them to you today in as much as I have care of them. I totally confide them all to you, children and adults. I place them under your holy and motherly protection. I consecrate them to you, I give them to you. Since you are the mother of the Good

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<sup>77</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-12, notebook Z, p. 219-221.

Shepherd, keep them from the enemies of salvation, paganism, heresy, the demons of bad habits. Pray for the poor strays, the apostates. I place myself, a poor sinner, under your holy protection. My time is near, the good Master is coming to call me to himself. Soon I will say the last "Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my heart, my soul and my life". Obtain for me from the Sacred Heart of our good Master the definitive grace of perseverance. Oh Saint Joseph, patron of a happy death, pray for me. Saint John, my second patron saint, pray so that I die in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

### 35 - Various notes, June 1906.<sup>78</sup>

*The arrival of Father Guilcher. Feasts of the Holy Trinity, and of the Sacred Heart. Monthly retreat.*

... May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be praised and thanked for the good help he has given to the Roma Mission in the person of good and reverend Father Guilcher, who just arrived to serve this Mission. That was more than needed. I thanked the Very Reverend Father Prefect. With the grace of the Sacred Heart and the prayers of our Mother, the most loving of all mothers, of Saint Joseph and of Blessed Margaret Mary, of all the Saints, the Mission will revive. We will discuss with the Very Reverend Father Prefect and the other good Fathers: Pennerath, Lebreton, so that the work be well done, as the Sacred Heart wishes.

*The Feast of Corpus Christi* [June 17] was beautiful. The procession included many people; they wanted the hymns and prayers arranged so that one part would pray and one part would sing. The procession is so long that they could not hear each other.

*Feast of the Sacred Heart* [June 22]. The feast was very reverent: there were fewer people. Lots of Communions. Those from afar were there for the Mass of Exposition at 6

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<sup>78</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-8, notebook M, p. 17 and 18.

o'clock; they had slept at the Mission. At 7 o'clock, general Communion: the faithful, the schools, the Brothers, and Sisters; a common thanksgiving, High Mass at 10 o'clock, continuous adoration after Mass by groups until 3 o'clock, the procession. We spoke about the infinite love of the Sacred Heart ...

*Retreat for the month of June*

... During this retreat, I saw that I needed always to have a memorandum before me on my table or in front of the statue of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows.

To stir up zeal, see what is the most urgent thing to be done; I should also have a little special program, especially for getting up and going to bed. Important: Consider the children from outside. How can we instruct them and hear their confessions? They will surely have their annual retreat during school holidays, but what after that? Being always on the run here and there, I don't spend enough time with each individual person.

How unfortunate that no one tells me anything about the disorders that exist here and there, that I don't see. Oh! How can I do something as a remedy if I don't know and no one tells me anything about them? O Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me and on all of us. O dear Mother, pray, pray always for us. *Spes mea, salve!*

... I must remind<sup>79</sup> myself to be patient, affable, approachable to people. I must show myself to be calm in difficult affairs in the midst of disorders; not trusting in myself, not allowing myself to reproach too much, rather abound in kindness, mercy, and fatherly charity. Refuse confession to no one. But I must pray, pray, and pray some more ... Kind, with a pure intention, as Saint Paul always advises. It changes everything into an act of divine love, every action, thought and suffering ...

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<sup>79</sup> The same ideas come back in notebook Z, p. 222-223, DG I-12, as well as these few lines on prayer and purity of intention, etc.

**36 - Retreat, February 18, 1907.<sup>80</sup>**

*Fear of death. Sacrifice of his life. General confession.*

... Here is the retreat, one of the greatest graces that the Heart of Jesus gives to religious souls. I have thought very little about it, only a few days, seeing the listlessness, and sleepiness which has come over me especially since last Christmas, a bad cold, absent-minded, etc., fear of death. I made some efforts during the Sisters' retreat to make the greatest sacrifice of all treasures which is one's life, and to accept it as Our Lord did: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit". I made some effort to encourage myself to make the supreme sacrifice which surpasses all others. One must strengthen his heart with the great thought of faith ...

O Jesus, I beg you, through your Immaculate Mother, have mercy on me, that I may make this retreat according to your good pleasure. Most likely it is the last of my life. The last one that I just made was not painful, but my poor head was so empty of good ideas; I would not have been able to prepare myself well for death.

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me, so that I might prepare myself fully to make the supreme sacrifice during the course of the year, that it not be sickness which takes my life, but that I render it calmly into the hands of my creator. *In manus tuas ... Doce me, Domine, facere voluntatem tuam.* [Ps. 30, 6; 142, 10].

To make once more a general confession of my entire life so as to inspire a great contrition in me, recalling the most serious faults, even though I will not be able to bring more clarity to it than in my last general confession of last year ...

I should also make a review of my outlook and how I care for souls: affability, kindness, go out to people, to sinners, go to them if they don't come to me. I have much to reproach myself, lack of fervor, doing what is easiest ...

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<sup>80</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-9, notebook P, p. 35-40.

During this retreat, give up the responsibility and care of the Mission to another. May the Very Reverend Father do with me what he sees fit. Ask if I should or am able to still teach catechism or give instructions. Make some observations about that, with no pretense, only out of duty. Oh! if the good Lord would give us an older priest with experience for Roma. Reverend Father Guilcher is excellent, but lacking in experience. I would have to say what I think about the lack ... what ought to be done for this poor Roma Mission ...

I would be content to have some little task. If I must keep at rest and do nothing, I will be equally content. I have my rosary, Holy Mass, Holy Communion. If need be, catechize some old men and women, an exhortation to the black Sisters, if need be ...

Yesterday and today, I have tried to prepare myself for a general confession on the whole year and a general confession of my whole life, recalling in general the general confession of last year and the past year itself, taking into account that I could not explain myself better and that my confessor is the same one. I have thus considered these two days as if they were the last of my life. I believe that if I were near death, I would not do better to inspire in me a deep contrition for the faults of my past life.

May the good Lord be praised for so many graces! If he give me any respite, it will be very short, a half-year, or a year at the most. I tried to make the sacrifice of my life to make in spirit the supreme act which will end my life, offering my soul most gently into my Savior's hands ...

I have a great desire to end my life in a holy way, to do all of my actions well in their own time, one after the other, with the best intention, to glorify the good Lord in all of them. Introduction, last chapter, means to live in peace and to die well. Each day has enough trouble of its own ... Oh! if I could get used to that completely. Meditation, examination, work, Mass, recreation, everything in this way. *Sive manducabitis, sive bibitis* ... [1Cor. 10, 31].

**37 - Annual Retreat, begun on May 19, 1908.<sup>81</sup>***Preparation for death.*

... Being in my 78th year, seeing the infirmities of old age which are very many, I should regard this retreat as being probably the last of my life; I must make it very seriously before being weakened by illness in mind and will. If the good Lord wishes to grant me a lucid mind right to the end, may he be praised! When I die may I be able to say as our Divine Master did to the heavenly Father: "O Father, into your hands I commend my spirit". I have received the letter notifying me of the death of our dear cousin, Mrs. Vuillemin, who died on April 13, 1908 ... The judgment which follows death causes us legitimate terror more than death does. However, is that fear the best disposition we ought to entertain if we are to fortify ourselves against the terrors of judgment and make it seem favorable to us? There is another word of the Holy Spirit which halts that terror and shows us the day of death as the most happy one of our life: "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" says the Apostle John [Apoc. 14, 13]. Then they will rest from their labors, for their good deeds will follow them and the Lord will take into account what they have done and suffered for him. As much as the prospect of judgment after death is terrible for the impenitent sinner, so much is it consoling and radiant for the just man. All his good works have been counted, and will follow him like so many advocates and bring triumph to his cause at the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge.

If I wish to be judged as favorably as Saint Joseph, I must imitate his virtues, lively faith, profound humility, and angelic purity. I have, as Saint Joseph, Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, I should lavish my love and adoration on him by frequent visits. A loving abandon of my-

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<sup>81</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-12, notebook Z, p. 44-45. Other short retreat notes of 1910 (notebook Z, p. 48) and of 1912 (notebook Z, p. 251-254) where Father Gérard speaks of general confession and copies some texts on scrupulosity.

self into God's hands, joined with a lively faith, and holy trust in the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ, includes all that is necessary to die a holy death, and that disposition is completely confirmed in the word of Our Lord dying on the cross: Father, into your hands I commend my spirit. My very kind Immaculate Mother, Saint Joseph, patron of a happy death, Saint Charles, Blessed Margaret Mary, pray for me ...

Now, since this retreat will probably be the last, I want to make it with lively faith and sincere sorrow for the most serious faults of my life. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I trust in you. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, may your kingdom come.

Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, pray for me ...

### **38 - Prayer, February 19, 1914.<sup>82</sup>**

#### *Prayer to the Blessed Virgin.*

The beautiful prayer of Saint Ignatius, martyr, to the Blessed Virgin, so that she deign to give him a place in her heart. There is not a more touching prayer than that of Saint Anselm: "O compassionate Virgin, you are the true Mother of the Savior, and the adoptive Mother of the sinner, enclose me in the depths of your motherly kindness ..."

Take note of those words: enclose me. As if he had said: after you have introduced me into the sacred asylum of your heart all burning with love, close its door for fear that I might want to escape. Let's take up the attitude of that saint toward Mary, and address the same prayer to her, asking every day with holy importunity for a place in her Immaculate Heart. There we will be in a shelter away from all evils and in the source of all good things. Let's talk like that to our friends: God is with me and he will never leave me alone as long as I try to do what pleases him. Oh my God and my all!

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<sup>82</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives DG I-12, notebook Z, p. 69.





## Index of Names

### - A -

Adam and Eve, 22.  
 Albini, C. D., O.M.I., 174-175, 233.  
 Allard, J. F., O.M.I., bishop, 19, 23-27, 30, 33, 39-43, 53, 55-56, 60-70, 73-82, 86, 88-92, 97-111, 129, 140, 155, 188, 194, 196, 201, 203, 221, 236.  
 Aloysius Gonzaga, 187, 193, 203.  
 Anne Madeleine, sister, 19-20.  
 Anselm, saint, 259.  
 Anthony, saint, 198.  
 Antoine, J. E., O.M.I., 142-146.  
 Auffray, V., O.M.I., 124, 137, 235, 240.  
 Augier, Cassien, O.M.I., 131, 136-142, 144-153, 156-157, 238-239.  
 Augustine, saint, 157-158, 164-165, 172-173.

### - B -

Barret, Justin, O.M.I., 19, 26, 35, 45, 58-63, 73-74, 89, 92, 108, 109, 166.  
 Barthélemy, J. M., O.M.I., 62, 68, 82, 88, 93, 94, 96, 105, 148.  
 Basutoland, cf. Lesotho.  
 Baudry, Alexandre, O.M.I., 137-138, 241.  
 Beck, O.M.I. Brother, 158.  
 Bell, major, 94, 95, 103.  
 Bernard, Jean, O.M.I., 218.  
 Bernard, Paul, O.M.I., 145.  
 Bernard, Pierre, O.M.I. Brother,

26, 44, 78, 81, 82-83, 92, 111, 120, 150, 202, 205-207, 231-232, 236.  
 Bermès, Aug., O.M.I., 135.  
 Bethlehem, 115, 116, 145.  
 Biard, Louis, O.M.I., 103, 110, 149.  
 Blessed Sacrament, 28, 156, 188, 190, 202, 206, 210, 213, 226, 233, 235, 243, 247, 258.  
 Bloemfontein, 79, 82, 89-90, 96, 121, 154, 158.  
 Bompard, Victor, O.M.I., 26, 30, 79, 154.  
 Brooke, madame, 111.  
 Burfin, N.V., O.M.I., 151.  
 Butler, sir, 154.

### - C -

Caledon, river, 95, 100, 117-118.  
 Calvin, 52.  
 Carr, mason, 108.  
 Cato, 199.  
 Cécile, sister, 93.  
 Cenez, Jules, O.M.I., bishop, 20, 123, 126, 128, 137, 144, 146, 147, 149, 152, 157, 158, 165, 167, 172, 235, 249, 252, 254.  
 Ceylon, 141.  
 Chardin, P.J., O.M.I., 211.  
 Charlebois, Ovide, O.M.I., 19.  
 Charles, O.M.I. Brother, 126.  
 Charles, saint, 259.  
 Chiniquy, abbé, 109.  
 Coghlan, mister, 110.  
 Colenson, doctor, 133.  
 Cumin, A. H., O.M.I., 188.

## - D -

Dassy, T., O.M.I., 188.  
 David, 198.  
 Debanne, Louis, O.M.I., 143.  
 De Lacy, J.N., O.M.I., 90, 92.  
 Delalle, Henri, O.M.I., bishop,  
 163.  
 Deltour, Marcel, O.M.I., 82, 88,  
 106-107, 109, 129, 131, 143,  
 158, 201, 225, 237.  
 Derrienic, E., O.M.I., 143-144,  
 150.  
 Dontenwill, Augustin, bishop,  
 160-166, 167-175.  
 Drakensberg, mountains, 59, 91,  
 155, 166.  
 Durban, 33, 86, 88-91, 92-93,  
 148-149.  
 Dutertre, P.F., O.M.I., 211, 222.

## - F -

Fabre, Joseph, O.M.I., 39-58,  
 63-70, 91-98, 101-105, 114,  
 115, 120, 124, 127, 201, 207.  
 Fayolle, J.F., O.M.I., 209.  
 Ferragne, Marcel, O.M.I., 19.  
 Ficksburg, 113, 116, 117, 126,  
 143, 224.  
 Fouquet, Leon, O.M.I., 19, 153-  
 155.  
 Frances de Sales, saint, 219.  
 Francis Regis, saint, 193.  
 Francis Xavier, saint, 141, 191,  
 193, 196.

## - G -

Gaughren, A., O.M.I., bishop,  
 108-110, 125, 128, 134, 237.  
 Gérard, madame, 243.

Gethsemane, 109, 117, 119, 149,  
 157, 172.  
 Grahamstown, 74, 95.  
 Grandin, Vital, O.M.I., bishop,  
 19.  
 Grolier, H., O.M.I., 218.  
 Guilcher, Martin, O.M.I., 169,  
 254, 257.

## - H -

Hamon, N., 251.  
 Harrismith, mission, 134, 147.  
 Hidien, A., O.M.I., 56-57, 60, 62,  
 66, 73, 74, 96, 201.  
 Hoffmeier, H., O.M.I., 159.  
 Holy Spirit, 225, 228.  
 Hugonenc, H., O.M.I., 152, 158,  
 167.  
 Hurley, D., O.M.I., bishop, 243.

## - I -

Ignatius, saint, martyr, 259  
 Island of Mauritius, 25.

## - J -

Jean Baptiste Marie Vianney,  
 Curé d'Ars, saint, 226-228.  
 Jerome, saint, 154.  
 Jesus Christ, 22, 32, 35, 38, 44,  
 50, 52, 76, 124, 130, 144, 166,  
 189-191, 196, 200, 209, 211-  
 214, 228, 229, 232, 239, 241,  
 250, 253, 254-255, 259.  
 John, saint, 193, 213-215, 222,  
 225, 245, 254, 258.  
 John Berchmans, saint, 188.  
 Job, brother of Moshoeshoe, 47,  
 58, 71.  
 Joel, chief, 133.

Johannesburg, 117, 137, 139-140.

Jolivet, Charles, O.M.I., bishop, 19, 78-82, 84, 87, 92, 94, 96, 97-99, 102-108, 146-150, 214, 222, 226, 241.

Jonathan, chief, 110, 117, 137, 139.

Joseph, saint, 34, 51, 161, 166, 190-193, 196-197, 208-215, 219, 222, 225, 231-234, 240, 243-248, 254 258.

#### - K -

Kimberley, 121, 125.

Knock, Ireland, apparitions, 213-214, 216.

Kokstad, 108.

Korokoro, mission of St. Joseph, 74, 80, 82-84, 88, 102, 105, 149, 226.

Kribs, F., O.M.I. Brother, 125.

Kurten, Jean, P.M.I. Brother, 124-125.

#### - L -

Lacombe, Victor, O.M.I., 211

Lagure. L.F., O.M.I., 211.

Lapointe, E., O.M.I., 42.

Lavillardière, Aug., O.M.I., 160.

Le Bihan, Fr., O.M.I., 38, 56, 59, 72, 88-89, 93, 96, 102, 107, 109, 126, 152, 157-158, 212.

Lebreton, Henri, O.M.I., 236, 254.

Lenoir, H., O.M.I., 127, 129.

Leo XII, 189.

Leo XIII, 149.

Léonard, Father, O.M.I., 218.

Leonard of Port Maurice, saint, 206.

Lesotho, 38, 39-40, 71, 79-80, 112, 115, 117, 120-121, 125, 128-129, 134-137, 142-143, 149-150, 152, 158, 160, 161, 172, *passim*.

Letsei, chief, 226.

Leydier, F.F., O.M.I., 211.

Logegaray, J.N., O.M.I., 188.

Luther, 52.

#### - M -

Maama, chief, 145, 244.

Magdalene, saint, 56.

Malouti, mountains, 126, 149.

Manuel, F., O.M.I. Brother, 236.

Maphetong, Andreas and Ernestina, 250.

Marchal, J. J., O.M.I., 154.

Margaret Mary, blessed, 192, 214-215, 219, 222, 225, 235, 243, 246, 254, 259.

Margaret Mary, mission, 110, 117, 121, 122, 124, 126, 128, 137, 240.

Marie Catherine, sister, 122.

Marie de Jesus, sister, 62.

Marie Joseph, sister, 62, 99, 149.

Martinet, Aime, O.M.I., 82-87, 97-112, 137.

Mary Immaculate, 21, 23, 35, 38, 45-47, 49, 52-54, 59-71, 100, 101, 103, 129-133, 137, 139, 142, 147, 152, 154, 155, 158, 159, 161, 164, 165, 167, 173, 175, 187-197, 203, 207-209, 212-216, 222, 225, 229-232, 238-240, 243-248, 251-259.

Maseru, 148-149, 247.

Masupha, chief, 84, 144-147, 159.

Mazenod, C.J.E., O.M.I., bishop, 19, 21-39, 45, 70, 155, 168, 174, 176, 188, 189, 199, 211, 243-244.

Melanie, sister, 226.

Michael, saint, 29.

Miller, G., O.M.I., 243-244.

Mitcel, mister, 115, 119, 143.

Molapo, chief, 88, 94-95, 98, 110.

Monginous, Odilon, O.M.I., 82-83, 88, 102, 106-107, 117, 127-128, 137-138, 148, 152, 237, 239, 240.

Monica, saint, 208.

Montmartre, 96, 101, 106, 139-149.

Montolivet, mission, 126, 158.

Moran, Patrick, O.M.I. Brother, 60, 202.

Morley, Michael, O.M.I., 125, 126

Moshoeshoe, king, 39-55, 59, 63-65, 71-77, 79, 83, 94-95, 98, 171, 226.

Mota, chief, 99, 109.

Mother of Jesus Village (Roma), 42-87, 101, 210, 219, 232.

Motse-oa-'M'a Jesu, cf. Mother of Jesus Village,

Mouchette, Ant., O.M.I., 151, 243.

Mourot, seminarian, 20.

Mozambique, 90.

Mulligan, Ph., O.M.I. Brother, 93-94, 97.

- N -

Nancy, major seminary, 20.

Natal, 33, 55-56, 68, 70, 74, 78-97, 121, 123, 152, 154, 168, 241, 243.

Nazareth, mission, 148.

N.-D. de l'Osier, 135, 151, 154, 155, 187-194.

- O -

Odila, sister, 243.

Orange Free State, 39-41, 79, 95, 110, 115, 140, 154.

Orange River, 144.

Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, 210, 251, 255.

Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, mission, 33-39.

- P -

Panda, chief, 25.

Paul, saint, 173, 193, 209, 255.

Payne, mister, 121.

Pennerath, J.P., O.M.I., 168-169, 170, 254.

Peete, chief, 141.

Peter, saint, 193.

Philippe, L., O.M.I., 143.

Philipstown, 90, 92.

Pius IX, 77-78, 85, 90, 95, 100, 141, 204.

Pius X, 167, 170.

Pietermaritzburg, 26-27, 31, 39, 85, 89, 90, 92, 93, 154.

Pitout, M., 113

Poirier, J., O.M.I. Brother, 82-83, 139, 141.

Porte, F., O.M.I., 19, 110, 113,

124, 135, 150, 158-159.  
Pretoria, 89.

- R -

Ramanella, chief, 110.  
Richard, Gustave, O.M.I., 151,  
154, 152, 188.  
Richard, Jean, O.M.I., 188.  
Richard, Jean-Louis, O.M.I., 42.  
Rodriguez, 223.  
Rolland, E., O.M.I., 145, 165,  
172, 226.  
Roma, Lesotho, 68, 73, 102, 106-  
108, 110, 120, 126, 138, 142,  
144-145, 146-150, 245-246,  
257, *passim*.  
Rome, Italy, 108-111.  
Roy, Laurent, O.M.I., 20.

- S -

Sabon, J. B., O.M.I., 27, 82, 236.  
Sacred Heart, 39, 124, 130, 137,  
140, 142, 147, 149, 152, 153,  
156, 157, 159, 163, 163, 164,  
167, 172, 191-193, 196, 203,  
204-208, 214, 219, 222, 225,  
229-234, 240, 244-256, 259.  
Saint-Alphonse, sister, 111.  
Saint-Augustin, sister, 158.  
Saint Bernard, sister, 111.  
Saint-Francis, sister, 135.  
Saint-Gabriel, sister, 135.  
Saint-Julien, sister, 125.  
Saint-Léon, college and farm,  
124-126, 134, 139, 140.  
Saint-Marcel, sister, 115, 135.  
Saint Michael, first mission in  
Natal, 21-27.  
Saint Michael, second mission

in Natal, 26-33.

Saint Michael, mission in  
Lesotho, 79, 82-84, 88, 102,  
159, 194, 220-221, 240, 244.  
Saint Monica, mission, 88-89,  
91-150, 157, 208-209, 229-230.  
Saint-Paul, sister, 102, 111, 135,  
159.  
Saint-Pierre, sister, 135.  
Sainte-Catherine, sister, 135.  
Samaria, mission, 172.  
Sancian, 141.  
Santoni, J.P., O.M.I., 174.  
Scharsch, S., O.M.I., 163-165.  
Semeria, E., O.M.I., bishop, 211.  
Sepota, chief, 171-172.  
Silvy, A., O.M.I., 188.  
Sion, mission, 117, 149, 157.  
Solomon, 198.  
Soullier, Louis, O.M.I., 111-140,  
142-143, 231-234.  
Stanislas Koska, saint, 188, 193.  
Steffanus, Adolphe, O.M.I., 20.  
Suarez, 158.  
Swape, 111.

- T -

Taylor, doctor, 103, 143.  
Tempier, Fr. de Paule H., O.M.I.,  
70-73, 132, 154, 174.  
Terpent, Jos., O.M.I. Brother, 44,  
45, 47.  
Thaba Bosiu, 56-58, 63-71, 75-  
76, 145, 147, 159, 226.  
Thabor, 169, 170.  
Thiry, F., O.M.I., 183, 197.  
Thlo-o-thle, 89.  
Thommerel, H., O.M.I., 192.  
Tivenan, L., O.M.I. Brother, 92.

- Transvaal, 78, 81, 85, 89, 100, 115.  
Tshopo, chief, 126, 226.  
Tuite, C., O.M.I. Brother, 82, 83.  
Turin, 109.
- U -
- Umtata, 108.
- V -
- Valat, C., O.M.I., 172.  
Vandenberghe, F., O.M.I., 174.  
Victor, saint, 144.
- Vincens, A., O.M.I., 54, 187.  
Vuillemin, madame, 258.
- W -
- Walsh, A., O.M.I., 89.  
Ward, mister, 117-120.  
Weber, N., O.M.I., 89.  
Weimer, Jos., O.M.I. Brother, 126, 132-133, 134, 137, 139, 150, 239.  
Whitehead, mister, 60.

## Index of Subject Matter

### - A -

Africans (Kaffers), 21-38, 62,  
114, 129, 132.  
Ancestor cult, 22.  
Angel Guardians, 193-194, 252.  
Apostasies, 133, 149, 232, 254.  
Apostolate of Prayer, 124, 232.  
Apostolic life, 165-259.  
Assumption, 203.

### - B -

Bakhoto, 133.  
Baptisms, 32, 70-72, 79-80, 85,  
101-105, 109, 120-121, 122,  
133, 139, 172.  
Baroa, 155.  
Basotho, 19, 42-45, 50-53, 56-  
71, 76, 92-93, 117-118, 133,  
172, 196, 209, 213, 217, 219-  
220, 228.  
Boers, 39-41, 57-71, 91-92, 95,  
101, 109, 125, 133, 154.  
Breviary, 162, 171, 226, 227,  
230, 234-236.

### - C -

Catchism, 27, 31-32, 36-37, 49,  
54-55, 203, 207, 208, 212-215,  
224-225, 257.  
Catechists, 81, 110.  
Catechumens, 55-58, 71-72, 122.  
Character, 194-197, 203-204,  
216-217.  
Church, 45, 102, 118, 167.  
Circumcision, 57, 105.  
Community, 216-217, 236-237.

Confessions, 26, 76, 207, 229-  
238, 240, 244, 245-246, 248,  
251, 253, 256-257.  
Confirmation, 85.  
Confraternity of the Sacred  
Heart, 205, 246.  
Conversion, 194.  
Coolies, 90.

### - D -

Death, 67, 156, 192, 200, 222-  
223, 236, 244, 247-250, 256-  
259.  
Demon, Satan, 30, 49, 50, 96,  
102, 209, 220, 224.  
Diaconate, 243-244.  
Diviners, sorcerers, 22, 29-30.  
Drunkenness, 108, 249.

### - E -

Ends of the Congregation, 174-  
175.  
English, 65, 148.  
Expulsion of religious from  
France, 213.  
Extreme Unction, 247.

### - F -

Fraternal charity, 139, 156, 195-  
196, 199-200, 213, 216, 236-  
237, 256.  
First communions, 205-206.

### - H -

Health and illness of Father  
Gérard, 108, 121, 137-141, 161,  
164.

Heresies, 205.

Holiness, 197-199, 203-204,  
210, 230, 232, 248.

Holy Family, 212.

Hope, 26, 27, 35-36, 51.

Humility, 19, 137, 139, 191, 196,  
204, 211-212, 230, 238, 251.

#### - I -

Immolation, 189-191, 211-212.

Irish, 53, 95, 125.

#### - J -

Jesuits, 126.

#### - L -

Lay Brothers, 41, 99, 124, 216,  
221.

Laziness, 205.

Letebele, 171.

Love of neighbor, 226, 228-229.

#### - M -

Malay, 133.

Marriages, 77, 86.

Marists, Brothers, 90.

Mass, 210, 219, 243, 247.

Matabele, 54-55, 228.

Materials for the mission, 99-  
100, 138, 216, 224.

Meditation, 203.

Mercy, 81, 213, 230.

Mortification, 191, 193, 207.

#### - N -

Neophytes, 71-72, 76-77, 85.

Novitiate, 187-189, 193.

Nudity, 31, 36-37.

#### - O -

Obedience, 19, 118, 194, 200-  
201, 204, 218.

Oblates of Mary Immaculate,  
congregation, 45, 71-72, 87,  
102, 114, 122, 130, 132, 136,  
142, 151, 158, 167, 173-175,  
187-191, 193, 197, 208-211,  
218-219, 228-232.

Oblation, 151, 189-191, 243-244.

Old age, 146, 162.

#### - P -

Paganism, 98, 105, 114, 132, 134.

Parents, duties of, 242.

Particular examen, 223, 241.

Penances, public, 85.

Perseverance, final, 151, 154,  
166.

Prayer, 163, 167, 212, 228, 245,  
253.

Preaching, 212, 228.

Priesthood, 243, 244, 249.

Protectorate, English, 64.

Protestants, 21-22, 27, 35, 39-  
40, 44, 47, 50-51, 54, 58, 76-  
77, 96, 109, 113, 125, 222.

Providence, 27, 114, 130, 142,  
164.

Prudence, 219.

Purity, 132, 188, 195, 204, 208,  
233, 238.

#### - R -

Religion of Africans, 22, 36.

Religious life, 86, 113-114, 150,  
187-259.

Reparation, 196, 205.

Resolutions, 194, 204-208, 213-



214, 216-217, 224-225, 235-236.

Retreats, 75, 76, 85, 194-259.

Rosary, 207, 239.

Rules, 107, 122, 125, 129, 132, 135, 190, 195, 198, 202, 207, 211, 218, 225, 232-233, 248.

#### - S -

Sacraments, 199.

Sacrifice, spirit of, 189-194, 230.

Salvation of souls, cf. Zeal.

Schools, 21, 48, 73, 78, 83-84, 89-90, 99, 105, 109, 124-128, 131-132, 137, 148, 150, 207, 214, 239.

Scripture, 204.

Scruples, 162, 238, 258.

Sesotho, 43, 82, 150, 158.

Sickness, 256.

Sins, 165, 198, 222-223, 238-239.

Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, 49, 59-70, 74, 76, 84, 89, 99, 105, 114, 116, 117, 121-122, 125-126, 143, 150, 216.

Sorcerers, cf. Diviners.

#### - T -

Tepidity, 139, 214-216, 217, 221, 225-226, 227, 231, 233, 241-242.

Timidity, 19, 139, 196, 204, 205, 208-209, 217, 219, 220, 221, 224, 227.

Trappists, 126, 131, 138, 148, 150.

#### - V -

Visits, 49, 98, 170-171, 209, 215, 224-225, 228.

#### - W -

Wars, 57-69, 150, 155.

Water falls, 206.

Way of the Cross, 251.

Will of God, 200.

Work, 28, 198.

#### - Z -

Zeal, 33, 36, 75-76, 81, 208-209, 211-215, 218, 221, 224-225, 234-235, 241, 245-246, 254.

Zulus, 21, 26, 48, 49, 133, 171, 173.

