

Collection OBLATE WRITINGS II, 5

**Father**

# **Casimir AUBERT, O.M.I.**

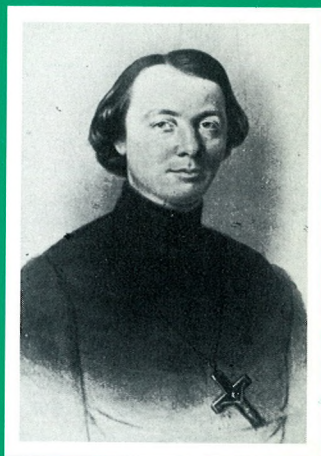
**(1810-1860)**

**Founder of the Anglo-Irish Province  
and Secretary General of the Congregation**

**Biography**  
by Y. Beaudoin, O.M.I.

**Spiritual and  
Historical Writings**

**Correspondence**



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



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Translated by Ronald Zimmer, O.M.I.

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1998





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Casimir Aubert  
(Vitagliano & Terris, phot.)



## INTRODUCTION

Today, few Oblates know Father Casimir Aubert. However, he played a prime role in the Congregation from 1833 to 1860, as Novice Master, Superior of the house at Calvary, Secretary General, founder of the Anglo-Irish province and especially as intimate collaborator of Bishop de Mazenod.

If Father Tempier was “the intimate friend” of the Founder, Father Aubert was his beloved son, but these two Oblates worked in close collaboration with the Superior General in governing the Institute. Thus it is fitting that we consecrate to them these first volumes of the second series of *Oblate Writings* which proposes to illustrate the lives and publish the writings of the first Oblates who, along with Bishop de Mazenod, contributed most to the spirit, customs, spheres of activity and works of the Congregation.

As with Father Tempier, Father Aubert’s files in the general archives contain only three or four notebooks and several dozen letters. But, in the correspondence for the years 1825-1860, we possess about 650 letters either addressed to Father Aubert or to other Fathers and Brothers in which he is mentioned. The few details found there have enabled us to compose the following brief biography. The citations from Oblate letters may appear numerous and sometimes rather long. It is part of the plan of this collection which hopes to acquaint people with the historical sources of the Congregation. Bishop de Mazenod’s name especially comes back very often, due to the fact that through his writings we come to know the character, activities and virtues of Father Aubert.

Several spiritual and historical writings can be found after the biography, as well as 56 letters.

These spiritual writings allow us to become better acquainted with the spirituality and practices of the early Congregation. At least at the beginning of the latter, there were many ascetics, that is, men capable of hard work and intrepid zeal, but few or no Oblates, it seems, experienced mystical graces of any kind, except occasionally the Founder

himself,<sup>1</sup> and, precisely Father Casimir Aubert. The latter was privileged with the prayer “of affection and contemplation”.<sup>2</sup> He often spoke of consolations, tender devotion<sup>3</sup> or of joy in reciting the divine office.<sup>4</sup> He admitted to having special graces<sup>5</sup> and, in 1835, a divine communication or *locutio*<sup>6</sup> as well as enlightenment on the excellence of the Mass, the importance of charity<sup>7</sup> and the meaning of sufferings united to the passion of Jesus Christ.<sup>8</sup> Bishop de Mazenod wrote to him about this on November 10, 1835: “When I hear what you say about the workings of grace in yourself, I am filled with an almost tangible joy; that is how God in his goodness deals with his children when they display goodwill!”<sup>9</sup>

Most of the letters published at the end of the volume were written by Father Aubert in his role as secretary general. He alone signed them, but he presents the thought and will of the Founder and the General Council. Almost all of these letters were included among the writings of Bishop de Mazenod submitted to the theological censors of the Congregation of Rites at the beginning of the cause for canonization. They do not measure up to those of the Founder in spiritual content, lively style, or often passionate waves of thought. Even though the letters of Father Aubert show signs of pondering and objective presentation, they nevertheless add a great deal to the history of the Congregation’s missions *ad gentes*.

Yvon Beaudoin, O.M.I.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Y.B., *L’Itinerario spirituale del beato Eugenio de Mazenod*, in *Quaderni di Vermicino*, 1988, pp. 21-28, 87-92.

<sup>2</sup> *Conduit à suivre* ..., pp. [11] and [22]. ([ ] = Pagination of the original).

<sup>3</sup> *Retreat of 1831*, p. [42]; 1833, pp. [8, 9, 10].

<sup>4</sup> *Conduit à suivre* ..., p. [18].

<sup>5</sup> General review of 1832, pp. [17 and 18].

<sup>6</sup> *Retreat of 1835*, p. [6].

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. [2].

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* pp. [5 and 6].

<sup>9</sup> *Oblate Writings* 8, p. 202. Cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AAM: Archives of the Archdiocese of Marseilles.

ADBA: Departmental Archives of the Lower Alps, at Digne.

AGR: OMI General Archives at Rome.

APR: OMI Postulation Archives at Rome.

Oblates are usually named without their first names which can be found in the index of proper names at the end of the book. An exception is made for Fathers and Brothers whose names could be confused, such as Casimir and Pierre Aubert, Charles and Victor Baret, Charles and François Bellon, Robert and Roger Cooke, etc.

Since this biography is written for the Congregation, few biographical details are given about the numerous Oblates mentioned therein. It is easy to find these details in the *Notices nécrologiques* and the *Missions des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*.



## BIOGRAPHY

### I

#### CHILDHOOD, VOCATION, FORMATION (1810-1833)

Joseph-Jerome-Casimir Aubert was born at Digne-les-Bains on September 30, 1810 to Laure-Modeste Castellane and Jean-Joseph-Louis-Pierre Aubert, merchant.<sup>1</sup>

##### *First years at Digne (1810-1826)*<sup>2</sup>

Casimir took his secondary education at the college at Digne.<sup>3</sup> This college, founded in 1474, became a lycée in 1886. From 1820 to 1826, it increased from 60 to 110 students, boarders and day-students, divided into four classes, from the last years of elementary school up to rhetoric.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Birth registration. Orig.: Registers of the civil state, ADBA 3 E 77/12. Casimir was presented to the official of the civil state by Louis Aubert, a cattle buyer, in the absence of his father. The father's first name and title as merchant appear in the birth registration of Pierre, future missionary to Canada, born February 3, 1814. *Ibid.* 3 E/77/11. No other details of the family can be found in the Archives at Digne. It seems that the parents were not married there.

After Casimir joined the Oblates, Mister Aubert became the administrator of Mrs. de Mazenod's property at St-Laurent-du-Verdon. We have recently discovered 222 letters from Mister Aubert to Mrs. de Mazenod (a few to Armand-Natal de Boisgelin), written from 1829 to 1850. (Handwritten archival material on Mister Georges de Boisgelin at Paris, MJ VI 1-3. In each of them Mister Aubert asks about his sons. Cf. also *infra*, note 43.)

<sup>2</sup> Casimir's baptismal notice has not been found either in the parish or diocesan records.

<sup>3</sup> At that time, this college was the only institution of secondary education at Digne, cf. Jules Arnoux, *Collège et lycée de Digne*. Digne, 1888. ADBA B 219. After the revolution, the minor seminary was opened at Forcalquier and confided to the Jesuits by Bishop Miollis, cf. *Le petit séminaire ... in Le meilleur Semeur*, July 1965. ADBA 1 V 21.

<sup>4</sup> Jules Arnoux, *op. cit.* pp. 59-60 and College of Digne: Correspondence, condition of the teachers and students after the revolution, ADBA 1 T 17, 18 and 19.

In a school calendar published about 1830, it is said that this college proposes to “render an important service to families by combining under the influence of religion in an agreeable fashion the teaching of arts and that of science and literature; and at the same time to keep the innocence of youth safe from every evil influence.”<sup>5</sup> That was far removed from Marseilles and its royal college which Bishop Fortuné de Mazenod denounced on January 19, 1829, to the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs as ungodly and whose students insulted “priests by squawking like crows in their hearing,” discussing “among themselves publicly as to what they believed, some preferring the transmigration of souls, others annihilation,” or even “fall with flailing arms on the two or three good young people who still have the simplicity to receive Communion on major feast days.”<sup>6</sup>

A lay man, Mister Geory, was principal from 1817 to 1826 but several of the professors were clerics,<sup>7</sup> and, among the pupils, wrote Mister Geory in 1820, “we number more than 20 in the college who wear a soutane; all of our pupils make their regular confession every two weeks.”<sup>8</sup>

Casimir’s name is among those listed as students in 1824.<sup>9</sup> He was then inscribed as one of those receiving a burse from the government. On June 7, we read in a letter from the Principal to the Rector of the Aix Academy: “I kindly ask you to admit ... young Aubert, a very distinguished student, a cleric whose family is not rich at all.”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> ADBA 1 T 17. This secondary school still exists, with 600 pupils; it is located just as you enter the city coming from Nice.

<sup>6</sup> See also Bishop Eugene de Mazenod’s letter to the Minister on November 4, 1838. AAM, Register of administrative letters.

<sup>7</sup> Jules Arnoux, *op. cit.*, p. 59 and a letter from the Principal to the Rector of the Aix Academy of October 26, 1823, ADBA 1 T 117. F.C. Cotte, a cleric, in 1823, taught in the elementary classes and J.P. Chauvet, a cleric, was a teacher in the fourth and fifth classes.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from the Principal to the Rector on December 30, 1820. ADBA 1 T 17.

<sup>9</sup> ADBA 1 T 17.

On February 26, 1827, soon after his arrival at Aix, Casimir wrote to a cleric at the Digne College, cf. “Journal de mon temps de noviciat,” AGR, Casimir Aubert file.

<sup>10</sup> ADBA 1 T 17. In his numerous writings, Father Casimir Aubert never spoke about his childhood. These few details we have given were the only ones found after a week of searching in the Digne archives.



Casimir became acquainted with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate during the jubilee preached at the cathedral of Digne, November 3 to December 11, 1826, by Fathers Mie, Jeancard and Guibert.<sup>11</sup> On November 15, Father Guibert, missionary and novice master,<sup>12</sup> informed Father de Mazenod about his work and announced that he had succeeded in establishing a choir group of about twenty of "the most outstanding young men who form a very brilliant choir which greatly edifies and astounds the people. In this area, apart from a few men, I think that they were not aware that men had received singing voices ... I especially attribute these miracles of grace to the prayers of my dear novices ... Very possibly I will be able to bring them some companions for their novitiate; several young clerics have asked to speak to me and I think they want to discuss their vocation."<sup>13</sup>

Before leaving for Corsica in 1835, Father Guibert was considered a recruiter without equal. In December 1826, he returned to Marseilles with Casimir Aubert. When the latter died in January 1860, Bishop Guibert, then Archbishop of Tours, wrote to Bishop de Mazenod: "I still remember all the details of our departure from Digne, when I took him, still so young, with his mother's consent and, after that, his so angelic comportment at novitiate where I was director."<sup>14</sup>

### *Novice (1826-1827)*

We have no other assessment of Casimir's behaviour at novitiate. He took the habit on December 24, 1826 at Marseilles and made first vows on December 25, 1827, at 17 years of age.<sup>15</sup> At times the novice master was away giving missions and due to an illness he was obliged to take three months of rest (August-October) with his parents at

<sup>11</sup> Some details of this mission are found in the book of Bishop A. Ricard, *Mgr de Miollis, évêque de Digne* (1735-1843), Paris, 1893, pp. 16-17, 186-187. Bishop de Miollis, from Aix, was a friend of the Mazenods.

<sup>12</sup> Father Guibert was novice master from July 1826 to the beginning of 1829.

<sup>13</sup> Father Guibert wrote several letters to the Founder at that time, cf.: J. Paguella de Follenay, *Vie du cardinal Guibert*, Vol. I, Paris, 1896, pp. 186-192.

<sup>14</sup> Archbishop Guibert to Bishop de Mazenod, January 20, 1860, cf. Rey II, 768.

<sup>15</sup> Register for the taking of the habit 1815-1850. AGR H b 14. Casimir was the 71st postulant to take the habit in the Congregation.

Reynard near Marseilles.<sup>16</sup> In 1827, Father Suzanne, superior of Le Calvaire was also gravely ill and spent several months of convalescence at Notre Dame du Laus during the summer. Fathers de Mazenod and Tempier as Vicars General of Marseilles resided either at the Bishop's house or at Le Calvaire according to need and closely watched over the novices and thus they knew them very well.<sup>17</sup> Casimir found eight there when he arrived and twelve others entered during the year.<sup>18</sup>

We have on hand Casimir's "Journal de temps du mon noviciat" (My novitiate diary), kept from January 10 to June 28, 1827. It consists of his meditation reviews.<sup>19</sup> They suggest a young man of few words but of great generosity. No doubt his father allowed him to depart with the hope of soon seeing him again. He came to visit him at novitiate but did not succeed in taking him back home. Casimir wrote on February 12, 1827: "I was quite moved when I went down to see my father ... I will turn a deaf ear to whatever my father might say to me to deter me from my vocation and will tell him without equivocation that I intend to be a missionary."

In fact, these mediation reviews do not contain anything of great interest. The novice used a work by Rodriguez<sup>20</sup> and stressed matters which dealt with the importance of salvation, the malice of sin, virtues, especially penance and mortification, and finally, the life of Jesus Christ, especially his passion. However, several meditations are on the

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<sup>16</sup> *Oblate Writings* 7, pp. 135-143; Rey I, 422-424, 430-433.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Register of the taking of the habit. Only seven of these 20 novices made first vows, among whom were D. André, C. Aubert, B.J. Paris and Pascal Ricard.

<sup>19</sup> AGR Casimir Aubert file, no. 2, 84 pages. This custom of making a review of meditation during novitiate thus existed already in 1826-1827. For details on this subject, cf. G. Cosentino, *Exercices de piété de l'Oblat*. Ottawa, 1962, *Arch. d'histoire oblate*, no. 19, pp. 58-60. The author wrote: "We have no idea when it was introduced for our novices."

<sup>20</sup> No doubt Alphonse Rodriguez, S.J., *Abrégé de la pratique de la perfection chrétienne*. We have in our Oblate library (H 7) the second volume of the copy that was found at the house in Aix, 1785 edition. In his work, *Exercice de piété de l'Oblat*, *op. cit.*, p. 53, Father Cosentino wrote that no text was prescribed among us. After 1887, they recommended the work of Father Boisramé, *Méditations pour tous les jours de l'année à l'usage de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de M.I.*, Tours, 1887, 3 volumes.

love of God and the advantage of approaching God through love, as well as several on major liturgical feast days.<sup>21</sup>

The novice often mentioned Mary's name and, on February 3, confided the following: "Before the Blessed Virgin, I will recite the *Ave Maris Stella*, a *Pater* and *Ave* and the *Sub tuum* on the days that I go down to the chapel, to thank this good Mother for the graces she obtained for me and to place myself under her protection, since she is without doubt the one who obtained the grace of my conversion."

### *Oblate*<sup>22</sup> (1827-1833)

At the end of 1827, when Casimir finished his novitiate, the Congregation had just accepted the direction of the Major Seminary in Marseilles. The Oblates (scholastics) followed their courses there, while living at Le Calvaire. It was there that the young Oblate studied philosophy and part of theology between 1827 and 1830.

However, we have no longer have any of his letters or class notebooks from this period. His study life is unknown except for what is known in general about the Major Seminary in Marseilles under Oblate direction. Brother E. Guigues taught philosophy in 1827-1828 and Father A. Telmon in 1828-1829. Father Dominique Albini was professor of moral theology from 1827 to 1835, while Father Telmon taught dogma in 1829-1830 and Father B.J. Paris taught Holy Scripture.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> February 21, March 28, April 23, 24, 26, May 6, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 28, 29, June 12 and 23; feasts of Saint Joseph, the Annunciation, Palm Sunday, Easter, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, Sacred Heart.

<sup>22</sup> The students were called "Oblates" after first vows until ordination. In the Founder's letters the word scholastic is found for the first time in letters to Father Tempier on September 1, 1833 and October 4, 1835 (*Oblate Writings* 8, pp. 98 and 196). However, these are excerpts from Yenveux and the latter may have added this word to the Founder's text. In the original letters that we have, Bishop de Mazenod used the terms scholastics and scholasticates only after the opening of Montolivet in 1854.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Yvon Beaudoin, *Le grand séminaire de Marseille et scolasticat oblat sous la direction des Oblats de M.I.*, Ottawa, *Archives d'histoire oblate*, no. 21, 1966, pp. 31-32.

Casimir certainly followed these professors' courses which in general were impersonal since they had to strictly follow the manuals,<sup>24</sup> such as the *Philosophie de Lyon*<sup>25</sup> and the *Institutiones philosophicae ... et theologicae ad usum seminariorum* ... of J.B. Bouvier.<sup>26</sup> In moral, the manual used by seminarians seems to have been the one of Bailly which Father Albin completed and corrected using the doctrine of Blessed Alphonsus de Liguori.<sup>27</sup>

The Oblates used the teaching and competition methods in common practice at Saint Sulpice at that time. This method was characterized by the importance given to personal study and the number of classes was reduced to two per day. Classes started with a succinct résumé, either by the professor or a pupil, of the material seen on the previous day. After that came the question period or recitation of the part of the lesson to be learned for that day, and finally, the teacher's explanation of the matter for the day.<sup>28</sup>

Casimir liked study and spent a lot of time trying to balance piety and study in proper proportion. At the end of the annual retreat in 1828, he wrote several pages about this and confided as follows: "Since I have had the good fortune to consecrate myself totally to God, I have had no greater experience of difficulty than that of properly balancing piety and study. This difficulty is that much greater in myself since I am naturally filled with pride, consequently desiring to promote myself by every

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<sup>24</sup> Father Tempier, the superior of the seminary, was strict on this matter. One day he wrote to a young professor who did not like Bouvier's philosophy manual: "Don't form a distaste for Bouvier nor run him down in front of your pupils. That's a major defect into which I have seen a good number of professors fall relative to the author that they had at hand, as if they believed that they would enhance their own personal merit in doing so, making themselves unworthy and senseless censors of a work of which they would not be capable of understanding even a tenth. I would freely say to them: give us your magnificent conceptions which will probably please everyone and ravish the literary world! But until such time as these masterpieces appear, please follow what we already have." Tempier to Charles Baret, October 16, 1847, in Yenveux VIII, 151.

<sup>25</sup> Or *Institutiones philosophicae* of the Oratorian, J. Valla, 1784.

<sup>26</sup> Works which came out in 1822, cf. *Le grand séminaire de Marseille*, pp. 95, 98, 234, note 32, and 237, note 58.

<sup>27</sup> Le. Bailly, *Theologia dogmatica et moralis ad usum seminariorum*, 1789.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Le grand séminaire de Marseille*, pp. 109-110.

means, so I have to do violence to myself so as not to fall into a veritable passion for knowledge. It is this improper use of study up to now that has been the greatest hindrance on the way to perfection ... The only goal that I must propose to myself in the studies I undertake is to render myself through them an apt instrument in God's hands to serve his glory, to form myself into a worthy minister of the Church, ready to defend its rights and interests and, finally, to become a worthy son of our Society, capable of fulfilling the goal it proposes to work for the salvation of souls and to promote the holy religion of Jesus Christ everywhere."<sup>29</sup>

In 1832 and 1835, Casimir still deplored in himself this passion for study to the detriment of piety.<sup>30</sup>

During the July Revolution in 1830, Father de Mazenod bought Saint Joseph's house in Billens, Switzerland, and moved the novices and scholastics there. Brother Aubert left on September 12 with the second "band" of emigrants.

Father J.B. Vincent Mille, the superior appointed for this house, recounted how at Aix he had succeeded in "disguising Casimir Aubert and Reynaud. The latter looked like a whippersnapper, the other, in black hat and coat, resembled a young doctor."<sup>31</sup>

Lacking professors and according to custom at that time, the more advanced students helped the younger ones. That is why Brother Aubert taught philosophy at Billens after Easter of 1831<sup>32</sup> and dogma at the major seminary in Marseilles after he had returned to this city during the 1832-33 school year.<sup>33</sup>

We know more about Casimir's spiritual life during his scholasticate. We possess his retreat notes for the years 1827, 1828, 1830, 1831, 1832 and 1833. They give us many details on the practices of the early

<sup>29</sup> Casimir Aubert, "Conduit à suivre dans mes exercices particuliers," 1828, pp. [26], [27], see *infra*, p. 148. The page numbers in brackets are from the manuscript.

<sup>30</sup> General review of the year, October 6-10, 1832, pp. [15-16] and the retreat made at Notre Dame du Laus in 1835, pp. [1], [27-28], *infra* pp. 174 and 197.

<sup>31</sup> *Missions OMI*, 1901, p. 286.

<sup>32</sup> Mazenod to Mille, March 19, 1831, *Oblate Writings* 8, p. 19.

<sup>33</sup> *Le grand séminaire de Marseille*, p. 31.

Congregation and the serious efforts of this Oblate to acquire the necessary virtues for the missionary life. The reader can judge for himself since these notes will be published.<sup>34</sup> Here we will simply underline some points more worthy of mention.

First of all, Casimir spoke dozens of times about his “faults” and “revolts” (1828 retreat, p. [15])<sup>35</sup> or of his “past aberrations” (1830, p. [28]); he admits that he misused creatures in his youth (1830, p. [26]) and often offended the merciful God who called him to the priesthood (1833, p. [10]). He recognized that he had taken a totally different path than the one to heaven, that he had merited hell instead (1828, pp. [13] and [15]); that he was like someone who “escaped hell” (1828, p. [15]) and he deserved to be condemned for what he had done in the past (1830, p. [30]), but had been saved by God’s mercy (1831, p. [44]). Finally he thanked Mary who had obtained for him the “inestimable grace” of conversion and his vocation (1827, p. [8]) since he had been a sinner when God called him to religious life in “an emerging Society, filled with fervor which had no other model of perfection than Our Lord Jesus Christ himself” (1831, p. [40], 1835, p. [2]).

What prompted him to speak of sin, hell and conversion was the work followed for almost all retreats; that of Father François Nepveu, S.J., “*Retraite selon l’esprit et la méthode de saint Ignace pour les ecclésiastiques*.”<sup>36</sup> Meditations for the first days treated of the last ends and sin, while those of the last days centered on the life and virtues of Jesus Christ.

He doesn’t hide his dominant passion: pride,<sup>37</sup> which explains why his ascetical efforts focus on acquiring humility.<sup>38</sup> What struck and inspired Casimir most in the life of Jesus Christ was the passion, freely endured sufferings out of love to save the world. He thus appears to be

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. *infra*, pp. 139-206.

<sup>35</sup> We refer here, in brackets, to the pagination of the original.

<sup>36</sup> Paris, 1749, 422 pages. Why did they follow this work or that of Father Bourdaloue, S.J. in all retreats at the beginning of the Congregation? An explanation is given in this regard in the introduction to the Retreat Notes, *infra*, p. 135.

<sup>37</sup> Retreats of 1827, p. [8]; 1828, p. [26]; 1830, p. [32]; 1831, p. [44]

<sup>38</sup> Retreats of 1827, p. [8]; 1828, pp. [18] and [26]; 1830, p. [32]; 1831, p. [44]; 1833, p. [10].

in line with the spirituality which was widespread in the last century. That spirituality tended to contemplate and imitate Christ crucified, adopting a lifestyle centered on mortification and voluntary humiliation, sustained by a theology of the cross, with little reference to the resurrection. This victim spirituality was not only a popular devotion but a theological doctrine as well, formulated already by Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629).

At the beginning of the XIXth century this current of thought was colored by the purpose of making reparation for the crimes of the Revolution. Congregations born at that time felt its influence. Some included the vow of victim to the three traditional vows.

Signs of this victim spirituality clearly appear in Father de Mazenod and the Congregation in its beginning.<sup>39</sup> Besides, the very name Oblate refers to this dimension. The Founder often wrote that he desired to die a martyr, if not of faith at least of charity.<sup>40</sup> In his ordination retreat, Casimir often meditated on the sacrifice of the Mass and the Victim offered there, through the priest's hands, to wash away the sins of the world.<sup>41</sup> On April 7, 1833, at the consecration during his first Mass, he asked for the grace "to die as a victim of charity in some public disaster or at least of zeal in the exercise of the most holy ministry confided to me, or rather," he wrote on that very day, "would that the prayer I made at the elevation of your precious blood be heard and that one day I might have the happiness of shedding my blood for love of You and for the holy religion of which you have made me a minister ..."<sup>42</sup>

If in his notes Casimir meditates very often on Jesus Christ and his virtues, everywhere he mentions Mary's name in the same way. During

<sup>39</sup> Cf. on this topic, a recent thesis of Father Maurizio Giorgianni, *Martirio, carisma della missione; sua protezione in Eugenio de Mazenod e nei Missionari Oblati di Maria Immacolata*, Roma, 1992.

<sup>40</sup> Most of the Founder's texts on this matter can be found in: Casimir Lubowicki, O.M.I., *Mystère et dynamique de l'amour dans la vie du bx Eugène de Mazenod*, Rome 1990, pp. 214-217.

<sup>41</sup> Retreat of 1833, pp. [3] and [23].

<sup>42</sup> Retreat of 1833, p. [25].

his oblation retreat in 1827, among other things he wrote: "After Jesus to place all my trust in Mary. I must serve her with all the tenderness of a most devoted son since I have no other mother than her; to have great devotion for her sacred heart through which to come to the heart of Jesus. To implore Mary's help in all my trials and temptations, to arm myself with her name as with a heavenly shield, to do nothing no matter how small without seeking her assistance. To celebrate her feasts with great devotion, do some small penance on the vigil, receive communion often in her honor, often ask her for the grace to acquire the virtues most dear to her, above all humility ... To recite the rosary with all possible devotion and consecrate myself to her, saying the *Sub tuum*, etc., at the end; to defend all Mary's rights and privileges, especially her Immaculate Conception, under which title she is the Society's mother. Finally, to fix my gaze on her right to my last breath, honoring her as my hope, my refuge, my consolation, my life, my joy, my peace, my protectress, my patron, my advocate, my teacher, my queen and mother, and to place the care of my eternal salvation in her hands ..."<sup>43</sup>

Let us close with two brief reflections of Casimir on the moments of sadness or joy during his days. This is what he writes: "Meals are still a very dangerous exercise in themselves and rarely are they done well. It often happens that we forget that they are a grave necessity of our present condition, and that we should only go to the refectory with a certain sentiment of regret and sadness, grieving over this necessity to attend to such a base action in itself which we have in common with animals, grieving that we are going to give energy to our enemy the flesh which can take the opportunity to revolt against ourselves."<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, he mentions two particular moments of joy. He writes that while he is getting up he tries, "to enter into feelings of joy at the sight of a new day given to me to serve my God and to love the

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<sup>43</sup> Retreat of 1827, pp. [6-8]. Casimir seems to indicate here that his mother had already died. Like his father, she died between 1850 and 1859. We haven't found the death notices. A married sister of Casimir and Pierre lived in Marseilles. She died in 1859. At that time Bishop de Mazenod wrote to Pierre, on March 29, 1859: "your good relatives who have gone before you to the grave. Their remains will be all reunited in my burial ground of Saint Laurent," *Oblate Writings* 2, p. 211.

<sup>44</sup> *Conduite à suivre dans mes exercices particuliers*, 1828, p. [30].



adorable and good Jesus, my Saviour.”<sup>45</sup> Then at time for breviary, he adds: “Among the great advantages I find in our Congregation, one of the most precious is that of reciting the divine office in common ... Those who serve Him should always be inspired by holy joy. Thus I will regard the obligation which I have agreed to of reciting the divine office as one of the sweetest occupations of my life, as a holy relaxation through which, after having given myself to other less pious exercises, I come to rest from time to time in Our Lord’s heart and draw new strength from meditating on his holy law.”<sup>46</sup>

Animated with these sentiments, Casimir prepared himself to receive Holy Orders: sub-diaconate and diaconate from the hands of Bishop Fortuné de Mazenod, on December 17, 1831 and October 14, 1832.<sup>47</sup> Bishop Eugene de Mazenod, Bishop of Icosia, ordained him to the priesthood on April 6, 1833.<sup>48</sup> He was the first Oblate ordained by the Founder. The latter wrote to Father Guibert on March 25, 1833, that he had allotted fifteen days of preparation for Brother Aubert’s priestly ordination. “He is already so worthy because of the perfection of his life. What an outstanding fellow he is! Intelligence, character, virtue, heart: he has them all to perfection. You can congratulate yourself on winning such a prize and the family will be eternally grateful.”<sup>49</sup>

The recollection of that day was never erased from Bishop de Mazenod’s memory. Once again he wrote in his diary on March 25, 1837 on the occasion of Father Charles Bellon’s ordination: “How can I recall without emotion that the very first ordination of my pontifical fecundity was of this precious Father Casimir Aubert, the first on whom I laid hands.”<sup>50</sup>

This affection was mutual. Casimir offered his first mass “in a very special way,” he wrote, “for that good and dear father to whom I have been bound by the most tender love for many years, of whom I can

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. [10].

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. [16 and 18].

<sup>47</sup> Ordination registers of those dates, AAM and retreat notes of 1831 and 1832.

<sup>48</sup> Ordination registers and retreat notes of 1833, pp. [4], [19], [23].

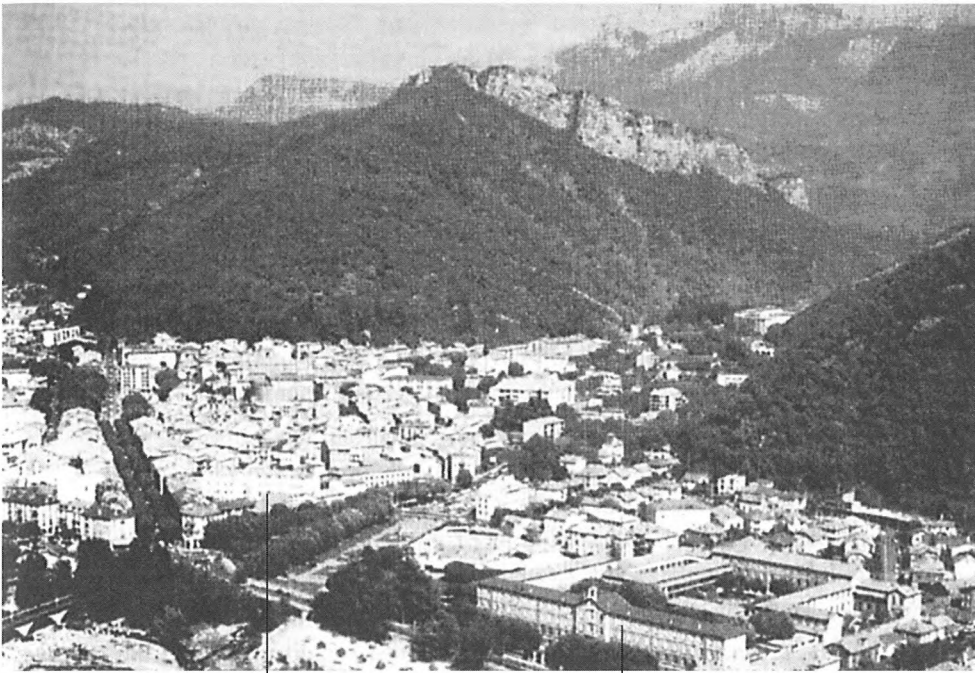
<sup>49</sup> Mazenod to Guibert, March 25, 1833, *Oblate Writings* 8, p. 82.

<sup>50</sup> APR JM, Rome, Mazenod Diary, March 25, 1837.

joyfully congratulate myself on being the first-born and that this new paternity that he has contracted with me has only made him more dear to me and more worthy of my total respect and most absolute dedication.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Casimir's retreat notes, April 7, 1833, p. [23].



Digne-les-Bains (Alps of Upper Provence)

The old city

The lycée today. The college where Casimir studied was located in a part of this building.



## II

## FIRST YEARS OF INTENSE MINISTRY (1833-1841)

*Novice Master (1833-1841)*

During his trip to Rome in 1825-1826, Father de Mazenod was edified when visiting several religious novitiates in Italy. He promised himself at that time to form Oblate novices better and especially to assign one of his best men, Father Hippolyte Guibert, exclusively to this duty.

Unfortunately, the latter was not inclined to sedentary work. As Master of novices from July 1826 to the beginning of 1829, he was often absent due to illness or to take part in one or two missions every year.<sup>1</sup> After that, from 1829 to 1833, at least five Fathers replaced one another at the novitiate: Reynier, Guigues, Capmas, Honorat and Mille.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, in 1833, the Founder found the religious he had been seeking for a long time: Casimir Aubert was named Novice Master and Director of scholastics right after his ordination at Easter, 1833. He remained such till February 1841.

During that time, the novitiate changed locale several times: Marseilles in 1833-1834, St-Just near Marseilles in the summer of 1834, Aix from September 1834 to August 1835, Notre Dame du Laus from September 1835 to August 1836, then Le Calvaire at Marseilles from October 1836 to 1841.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the few candidates entering the Congregation before the sending of several Oblates to England and Canada, Father Aubert had the joy of seeing 91 novices take the religious habit.

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<sup>1</sup> *Oblate Writings*, Vol. 6 & 7: index: novitiate, Guibert.

<sup>2</sup> *Missions OMI* 1930, pp. 96 and 98. *Oblate Writings* 7, index under these Fathers' names.

<sup>3</sup> *Missions OMI* 1930, p. 97.

Being a man of order and method, he tried, wherever he worked, to establish traditions so as to preserve the memory of the past. As novice master he left precious traces in this regard. Especially he kept the Register of the Taking of the habit with precise dates and signatures, started by the Founder but often neglected before 1833 and after 1841.<sup>4</sup>

Likewise, it seems, it was he who began to write up reports on each novice so as to enlighten the General Council in view of admission to vows.<sup>5</sup> Above all, he wrote the *Directoire des novices* which treats of daily, weekly and monthly exercises.<sup>6</sup>

Bishop de Mazenod followed the novice master closely. From Rome where Pope Gregory XVI had temporarily exiled him, the Bishop of Icosia wrote to Father Tempier on October 29, 1833: "You did right in giving that angel Aubert a change of air for a while; I do hope that it is only a question of his taking a break which you felt he should have, not of a mandatory rest. I am always anxious about that child, for fear that his health may suffer as a result of all the work he has."<sup>7</sup>

To separate novices and scholastics and to leave more room for the latter at Le Calvaire, the novitiate was transferred to Aix in 1834-1835. At the beginning of October 1834, Bishop de Mazenod instructed Father Courtès, Superior of the house at Aix: "The master of novices must give himself fully to his task. Consequently, he must never be diverted from his usual occupations concerning the novices whom he must, so to speak, gather under his wings as the hen gathers her young under her wings. If on occasion the superior wishes to employ the master of novices for some purpose, he should come to some arrangement with him as to a suitable time, so that the novitiate which is properly-speaking his only concern, will not suffer on account of it ..."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Registre des prises d'habit* 1815-1850, AGR, H b 14.

<sup>5</sup> Not all of these notes have been preserved. In the Oblate General Archives under the file: Marseille, Calvaire, novitiate, we have those for the novices of 1833-1834 in an ad hoc notebook of which only pages 49 to 79 remain.

<sup>6</sup> A handwritten manuscript of Father Charles Bellon, it seems about 1835-1836. Postulation Archives at Rome, DM IX 6, 34 pp. Oblate tradition attributes the composition to Father Casimir Aubert. For proof in support of this tradition, cf. *infra*, p. 148, introduction to "conduite à suivre dans mes exercices particuliers" 1828.

<sup>7</sup> *Oblate Writings* 8, p. 127.

<sup>8</sup> Letter of October 2 & 3, *Oblate Writings* 8, p. 127.

In August 1835, to withdraw the novices from the contagion of cholera which had broken out at Marseilles and Aix, the superior general sent them to Notre Dame du Laus; they stayed there a year.<sup>9</sup> Thus an ongoing correspondence was exchanged between Father Aubert and Bishop de Mazenod.<sup>10</sup> Always moved by the content of the letters he received, the latter offered various pieces of advice. For example, on January 3, 1836, he wrote: "But since the aptitude you received for the sciences is a gift from God, I judge it important that you don't neglect them. Assign them a subordinate role, yes; shun and leave them in disuse, no. I urge you not to be selfish in savouring all alone God's communications. Be generous with your riches, share them with others. Draw them, impel them if need be by the power given you by the light and grace you have received. I'm not asking this just for your handful of novices but for all those around you, especially those I've placed expressly under your direction. I knew you would be faithful and I was counting without hesitation on an overflowing abundance in which I wanted certain of our men to share."<sup>11</sup>

On the following April 21, he reproached him for allowing himself to be influenced by Father Mille, Superior of Notre Dame du Laus, in sending away the novice Pélissier. He concluded, saying "There are trials too strong for our weak humanity."<sup>12</sup>

On May 16 he was concerned about not receiving any news for some time and added: "Now you know that you and I are one in heart and spirit, quite apart from the supernatural bonds that bind us so closely. You understand in that light that it is already a lot to be deprived of your presence and make the sacrifice of your pleasant company for the Congregation's sake." Once again he invites him to occupy himself

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<sup>9</sup> Mazenod to Tempier, July 25; to Guigues, August 1, 1835, *Oblate Writings* 8, pp. 171, 176.

<sup>10</sup> Father Aubert's letters have disappeared. We have several excerpts from those of Bishop de Mazenod, cf. *Oblate Writings* 8, pp. 202-203, 206-208, 222-224, 229, 231-232, 237-238, 250-251, 253.

<sup>11</sup> *Oblate Writings* 8, pp. 206-207.

<sup>12</sup> *Oblate Writings* 8, p. 223.

exclusively with the novices, leaving them alone the least time possible to go on mission or hear the pilgrims' confessions.<sup>13</sup>

In August 1836 the novitiate was transferred again to Marseilles after a brief stay in Aix. The house of Le Calvaire had in fact remained almost unoccupied since October 1835 when, for the sake of economy, the scholastics were sent to the major seminary so as to maintain only one community. What is more, the death of Father Pons in September 1836 left a vacancy among the professors. At that time Casimir Aubert was called to replace him as professor of dogma while remaining novice master.<sup>14</sup> On that occasion the Founder wrote to his beloved son one of the most beautiful letters, in which his temperament as a leader especially appears but also his submission to Divine Providence: "The sudden death of Father Pons whose absence will always be felt, and the blameworthy departure of Father Pachiaudi, place me in the necessity of calling you to the major seminary at Marseilles. In consequence the novitiate will follow you to Marseilles. It is not through mere flightiness that I am changing the project in this way; but who can cope with completely unforeseeable events? Who can offer resistance to the very power of God? The ways of Providence are a deep mystery to me. Our part is to submit ourselves to whatever they bring that is hard or painful, without ever being disconcerted, even when they pitch us into situations of great difficulty. When we cannot proceed under full sail, then we must resort to tacking and make progress with sails trimmed, even down to the smallest sail that is raised on the mast-head and called the top-gallant sail. All I ask in these painful and perplexing circumstances is that the pilot be in charge during the storm, that the crew obey in silence and that I be spared complaints that are out of place in a crisis when each one must carry out his task as best he may in the post assigned to him."<sup>15</sup>

We have on hand few letters from the Founder to Father Aubert from 1836 to 1841 since the Superior General was able to meet the

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<sup>13</sup> *Oblate Writings* 8, pp. 223, 229, 232, 237.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. various letters of Bishop de Mazenod to Fathers Guigues, Mille and Courtès, *Oblate Writings* 8, pp. 244, 246, 249, 252.

<sup>15</sup> *Oblate Writings* 8, p. 253.



novice master personally as often as he wished at that time. He even abused this availability since, as we shall see, he soon named him superior of the house of Le Calvaire, all the while keeping him very busy as his private secretary.

Did Father Albini, not very satisfied with the virtues of some of his oblate brothers in Corsica, discreetly wish to warn Bishop de Mazenod about this matter? He wrote to him on February 4, 1837: "Let's hope that the novitiate, carried out in a correct manner, will give other guarantees to the Institute, and Reverend Father Aubert at this time is fulfilling a very demanding duty. I know he has his eyes open, but should open them even more, everything depends on it."<sup>16</sup>

The superior general himself became aware that he was asking too much of the novice master. During his trip to Notre Dame de Lumières in June 1837, during which he accepted this third Marian shrine, he had to promise to replace him soon at the seminary.<sup>17</sup> He wrote to him about it: "In the meantime, my dear son, give all your attention to the novitiate. I know that they are not lacking instructions, but guidance has been defective for one reason or another, and thus the novices generally do not change, do not improve, which is a great misfortune. No doubt, this is due very much to the times in which we are living, but somewhat also to the excess of your occupations which have always divided your attention."<sup>18</sup>

At the end of the courses in July, Bishop de Mazenod asked Father Aubert to go for a rest at Notre Dame de Lumières but various matters hindered him from doing so.<sup>19</sup> In October he forced him to take three weeks holiday at St-Martin des Pallières where Bishop de Mazenod's sister spent the summers with her children.<sup>20</sup> The novice master stayed there only fifteen days and received after that the following volley of reproaches: "The reasons you allege to excuse yourself are not acceptable; I knew beforehand about the usefulness of your presence at the house of Le Calvaire and all the service you could render in the church.

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<sup>16</sup> Orig.: APR, Albini's file.

<sup>17</sup> Aubert gave up teaching in 1837 after only one year.

<sup>18</sup> Mazenod to Aubert, June 3, 1837, *Oblate Writings* 9, p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> Mazenod to Aubert, July 4, 1837, *Oblate Writings* 9, p. 40.

<sup>20</sup> Mazenod to Aubert, October 14 and 19, 1837, *Oblate Writings* 9, pp. 65-67.

Thus you did not have to trouble yourself about it anymore. I had sent you out to the country precisely to take your mind away from these concerns. You cannot defend yourself by claiming a lack of simplicity in your obedience for you knew my intention too well. If you fall back into your usual state of weakness and you are obliged to apply the brakes in the midst of your year's work, you will have to blame yourself before God for being its cause. If your health continues to get worse, you will be responsible for it before God, before the Church, the Congregation and myself. When one is sent to teach solid virtues, one must behave in a way that would hardly be permissible to the inconsiderate fervour of a novice. I intend that the week you are going to spend at Aix be a supplement to your stay at St-Martin ... ”<sup>21</sup>

We know only very few details about the novice master in 1838-1839. However, just before his illness, Father Albini received a letter from Father Aubert to which he replied on July 2, 1838. “I have to thank you very much in that, amidst your time-consuming occupations, you knew how to find a few moments to give to a brother who loves and respects you, God knows how much, and who will love and respect you even more in the measure that he knows you to have become a great saint in order to form your dear novices as saints in the same way.”<sup>22</sup>

We know only a few varied details about the novitiate in 1839-1840. They have their source in letters of the Abbé Jean Joseph Françon to his friend the Abbé Vève. Having entered novitiate on June 28, 1839, the Abbé Françon recounted that from the end of June the novices went to spend some time at Notre Dame de Lumières. He wrote: “Father Aubert made us leave Marseilles on foot. We spent the night at Aix and the day after we started walking early in the morning. It was June and hot weather. We arrived at Lourmarin at one o'clock in the afternoon and at Notre Dame de Lumières in the evening. Father Aubert did not allow us to be lazy or prodigal. At Lourmarin he had us eat onions, cheese and bread around a fountain; he spent two francs for all of us; we were a dozen travellers.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Mazenod to Aubert, October 14, 1837, *Oblate Writings* 9, p. 66.

<sup>22</sup> Father Albini to Casimir Aubert, July 2, 1838, in *Missions OMI* 1938, pp. 303-304.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Abbé Redon, *Vie du Père Françon, omi, missionnaire provençal*. Avignon, 1902, p. 52.

In a letter of November 30, Father Françon spoke about his novitiate life, studies and works. Among other things he wrote: "On All Saints day we had our long retreat, eight days ... You wouldn't believe how much my ideas, opinions and ways of acting have changed. My total delight is now to remain enclosed in my cell, from morning to evening, in the company of Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Augustine and other people like that, with whom it is hard to be bored. I have an exceptional taste for study but my novitiate program does not allow me to spend as much time in it as I would like. Every hour, even every minute I could say, of our time is very full; days pass with astonishing rapidity."<sup>24</sup> If he was vigilant about spiritual formation, Father Aubert was likewise a promoter of study. Father Françon gave several missions during the winter while a novice. When he came back, he wrote to Mister Vève again: "Since my return to Marseilles I am studying and preparing sermons and I am doing fine with that. Every morning, in the fresh air, I cross the bridge to go and say mass at the Bonne Mère de la Garde, where I have people from pretty well every nation under the sun. My life is not too solitary."<sup>25</sup>

Bishop de Mazenod came to preside at the oblation ceremonies and the renewal of vows for the scholastics on February 17 or during the final mass of the annual retreat on All Saints Day.<sup>26</sup>

Commentaries on the way that Father Aubert fulfilled his duty as novice master are rather rare but very laudatory.

Father Ambroise Vincens (1803-1863) was a novice of Father Aubert in 1833-1834. In his death notice, written by Father Joseph Fabre, we read these lines: "There weren't many novices but their dispositions were admirable. They felt the proximity of the cradle of the Congregation and that spirit of fervor and dedication which animates new-born religious families filled every heart and daily inspired new heroic acts of virtue. Under the direction of Reverend Father Aubert, formed from his most tender youth by our beloved Founder, we could

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>26</sup> Mazenod diary, February 17 and November 1, 1837, February 17 and November 1, 1838, February 17, 1839, etc.

see them giving themselves with touching emulation to every practice of most generous renunciation; love for the Congregation, fraternal charity, and zeal for the salvation of sinners dominated these souls who had left all for the glory of God.”<sup>27</sup>

In the *Chroniques de N.-D. du Laus*, Father Simonin wrote that in 1835-1836, “Father Aubert directed his novitiate wisely and kindly; however, he was criticized for being too indulgent at times. He knew how to be firm if need be and had the courage to send away at one time several postulants who didn’t show the desirable guarantees. In spite of the need for men, he preferred quality to quantity.”<sup>28</sup>

In fact, it seems quite true that he did prefer quality to quantity. Of the 91 novices with whom he worked, only 36 pronounced vows (39%) and 26 (28%) persevered. If we compare these numbers with the preceding years, we note that there was some progress. From 1815 to 1825, of 64 novices 33 pronounced vows (51%) and only 18 died in the Congregation (29%). From 1826 to 1833, of 81 who entered, there were 32 oblations (39%) and only 15% died as Oblates.<sup>29</sup>

### *Director of Oblates*

In his letter of 1838 to Father Aubert, Father Albini spoke of his “time-consuming occupations.” Let’s mention something about his secondary duties during 1833-1841.

After the return of the oblates or scholastics from Billens to Marseilles at the beginning of January 1833, the direction of studies and spiritual formation were confided to Brother Aubert, still a deacon.<sup>30</sup> He took this task seriously and carried it out until the novitiate was

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<sup>27</sup> *Notices nécrologiques* OMI, vol. 1, pp. 124-125.

<sup>28</sup> According to this chronicle Bishop de Mazenod visited Notre Dame du Laus in July 1836, cf. *Missions* OMI 1902, pp. 69-70.

<sup>29</sup> Statistics compiled from the *Registre des prises d’habit 1815-1850*. AGR, H b. 14.

<sup>30</sup> Rey (I, p. 554) says that spiritual direction was entrusted to Father Honorat, superior of the house. This is contradicted by a contemporary document “*Compte rendu du directeur*,” April 20, 1834. AGR, Casimir Aubert file. This report is published, cf. *infra*, p. 206.

transferred to St-Just and then to Aix in the summer of 1834.<sup>31</sup> We have on hand the *Director's report* composed on April 20, 1834. According to this report, the Founder had asked Casimir to form the oblate students in religious life and to direct them in studies. In 1833-1834, there were 9 novices and 14 scholastics, 6 of them priests.<sup>32</sup>

From the spiritual point of view, the director set out to form the candidates "in religious life" and to "further develop and solidify their virtues." To this end he gave them instructions and often met with each one individually.<sup>33</sup>

As for studies he sought to direct them "so as to render these profitable to them and have them acquire the knowledge that would make them learned men."<sup>34</sup> "Learning and piety, that was always my motto," he wrote, "and the goal I pointed out to them as the only one worthy of their total effort."<sup>35</sup>

He didn't just repeat the seminary philosophy and theology courses but gave literature and composition classes and taught as well elements of the sciences: physics, geometry, algebra, so as to allow oblates "to speak of these matters without becoming a source of ridicule to the young people of their age who had studied in colleges."<sup>36</sup>

The director admitted that his efforts were not crowned with success due to his youth and inexperience, the illness of several students and the absence of the Founder who was obliged to stay in Rome for several months in 1833. But Father Aubert concluded his report by proposing to the Superior General a full program of oblate formation. Among other things, he wrote concerning studies: "It seems to me that what we must uniquely envision for our young oblates is to train them

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<sup>31</sup> At Aix and Notre Dame du Laus, the Founder placed under Father Aubert's direction several young Fathers in vocation crisis: Kotterer, Reynaud, Marcellin, Gignoux, etc. Cf. *Oblate Writings* 8, pp. 151, 174-175, 222-224, 237-238, 250-251.

<sup>32</sup> Among these scholastics was Pierre Aubert, Casimir's younger brother, cf. no. 1, *infra*, p. 49.

<sup>33</sup> *Compte rendu du directeur* ... pp. [1], [2], [3]. He gives details of each Oblate, pp. [5], [6], [7].

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. [1].

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. [2].

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. [7].

in theology and preaching, that is, to form men capable of fulfilling their ministry in the confessional in a fruitful manner and announcing the Word of God with dignity.”<sup>37</sup>

If the young director possessed good practical sense and knew how to limit his endeavors from an intellectual standpoint, he showed himself more demanding from the spiritual point of view. “What one can propose along those lines,” he added, “is to have them so love community life, silence, religious exercises and all that constitutes regularity that it would be their element outside of which lifestyle they would only feel ill-at-ease and ardently desire to return to it as soon as possible. On top of that one must form them in obedience, but in perfect obedience, to be indifferent to everything and see themselves only as instruments that one can use for whatever purpose one thinks fitting, without them having to bother themselves in the least about what is prescribed for them; finally, one must propose to inspire in them a great spirit of sacrifice, a complete abandonment of all their little concerns, total self-denial, with unlimited attachment to the family and an ardent desire to do everything to be useful to it and serve it as worthy children ... there is no other way of overcoming our childishness and taking on more expansion and life, and finally to prepare ourselves for the future.”<sup>38</sup>

### *Professor*

We know little about Father Aubert as a professor. He taught philosophy at Billens in 1831-1832. At Marseilles, he taught dogma in 1832-1833 and 1836-1837, then philosophy in 1841-1842.<sup>39</sup>

He was only 20 years old when he taught philosophy in 1831. Father J. Magnan, originally from Marseilles, who became superior of the seminary in Ajaccio, remarked sarcastically to Father Aubert in 1852: “I am still superficial ... since *rosa rosae* I have been unfortunate enough to meet a great number of untried men and methods. You yourself, dear friend, were not a doctor *utriusque juris*, when you had the honor of being my professor. Stop there! that’s a tirade ending with an

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. [8].

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. [8], [9].

<sup>39</sup> Y.B. *Le grand séminaire de Marseille, op. cit.*, p. 31.

impertinence ... Besides, it wasn't your fault that you were only two years older than I; talent no matter how real does not supply for everything."<sup>40</sup>

### *Preacher*

In January 1836 when he was at Notre Dame du Laus, the novice master preached, along with Fathers Mille and Marcellin, the mission at La Faurie in the diocese of Gap. Bishop de Mazenod learned of it afterwards and absolutely forbade him to commit this fault again.<sup>41</sup> In the history of Notre Dame du Laus Father Simonin spoke about the success of this mission and added: "Father Aubert made his debut in apostolic ministry. He proved that his preaching talents were not inferior to the qualities which make him a remarkable man under so many other titles."<sup>42</sup>

Soon after his arrival at Laus in 1835, he preached the annual retreat to the local community, made up of four priests, a few brothers and novices among whom were Lucien Lagier, Charles Bellon and Jérôme Pont who have all rendered great service to the Congregation. "Everyone appreciated his words," commented Father Simonin.<sup>43</sup>

Returning to Marseilles in autumn of 1836 Father Aubert, "always ready," had to preach the opening retreat for seminarians and scholastics, replacing at the last minute Father Courtès who had "declined this work as being beyond his strength."<sup>44</sup> As superior of Le Calvaire he took part after that in the mission at Laroque in December 1838 and that at Rouet in January 1839.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Father Magnan to Father Aubert, August 24, 1852. AGR, Magnan file.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Oblate Writings* 8, pp. 216, 222-223, 231-232.

<sup>42</sup> *Missions OMI* 1902, p. 75.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54-56.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. V. Gaben, *Chronique de la maison du Calvaire à Marseille, 1821-1965*, vol. I, pp. 375 and following. In February 1841, Father Aubert had been assigned for the mission at Aups; hindered from going there, he was replaced by Father Telmon, cf. Telmon to Aubert, March 3, 1841. AGR, Telmon file.

*Superior of Le Calvaire community*

Father Aubert was superior of Le Calvaire from the beginning of August 1837 until August 12, 1841. In 1837 Bishop de Mazenod, it seems, intended to name him spiritual director of scholastics either at the major seminary or at Notre Dame de Lumières.<sup>46</sup> But at the conclusion of the General Chapter held at the major seminary from August 4-8 the Founder and his counselors determined the personnel for each house. He himself wrote the rescript which designated the personnel for Le Calvaire: Casimir Aubert, superior and novice master, E. Semeria, J.A. Bernard, Charles Bellon and several brothers including Pierre Bouquet, Basile Fastray and J.M. Roux.<sup>47</sup>

It certainly was not a sinecure. The house of Le Calvaire was always considered as one of the most difficult and most dangerous for a member's perseverance because of the incessant coming and going of many faithful who attended the church of the Accoules (Notre Dame de Bon Secours). Besides doing ministry at the church, the Le Calvaire<sup>48</sup> community worked with the Italians,<sup>49</sup> with the Association of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows and the Passion, with the chaplaincy at Notre Dame de la Garde,<sup>50</sup> with the Sisters of Saint Charles<sup>51</sup> and with the prisons (a prison for those on remand and a jail). On top of that, the

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<sup>46</sup> Mazenod to Aubert, July 4, 1837. *Oblate Writings* 9, pp. 40-42, and V. Gaben, *op. cit.*, pp. 284-285.

<sup>47</sup> Register of the minutes of the Council of Le Calvaire, August 1837, Archives of the southern French Province at Lyons, n. 23.

<sup>48</sup> The community at that time was made up of eight or ten Fathers and Brothers without counting novices. In 1837 the bursar had to feed an average of 22 people daily, cf. Register of the minutes of the Council of Le Calvaire, January 1838. Being always precise, Father Aubert opened three account books: for the church, for the local community and for the total project including the novitiate, cf. Register of minutes of the council, March 2, 1838.

<sup>49</sup> Work founded by Father de Mazenod soon after 1823 and later entrusted to Father Albini. When the latter left for Corsica in 1835, 6000 Italians attended on occasion the Italian chapel, situated quite close to Le Calvaire on Hotel-Dieu street, cf. *Oblate Writings* 8, p. 157. Father Semeria replaced Father Albini until 1840.

<sup>50</sup> The Fathers at Le Calvaire were put in charge of Notre Dame de la Garde from 1835 to 1850.

<sup>51</sup> Father Aubert was their extraordinary confessor.



Fathers of this house, with those at Aix, preached several missions each year.<sup>52</sup>

Among these diverse ministries, the superior took charge especially of the Association of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows and of the church.

Bishop de Mazenod canonically erected the Association on September 16, 1836 with the permission of the Servite General.<sup>53</sup> Father Aubert composed the rules which he published in 1838 with the *Manual of devotion on the sorrowful mysteries of the Blessed Virgin Mary for the use of the members and associates of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows* ...<sup>54</sup> In 1838 this association counted 800 members, full or associate members.<sup>55</sup>

The chapel was then very well attended and, as at Aix, one Father was always at the service of the faithful for confessions. Father Aubert's successor, Father Martin, wrote in 1844 that confessions were going down due to the lack of a regular confessor. He often went on missions, whereas his predecessors, Fathers Honorat and Aubert "never left their post even for a single day."<sup>56</sup>

The crowds of faithful increased greatly on the occasion of ten major feasts. During holy week people came to pray at the foot of Le Calvaire built during the mission of 1820. The feasts of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, of Blessed Alphonsus de Liguori, etc., were followed by an octave with preaching.<sup>57</sup> The superior had his fellow Oblates or the

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<sup>52</sup> At that time Fathers Telmon and Bernard preached several missions each year, cf. V. Gaben, *op. cit.*, pp. 373-396.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Mazenod diary, September 16, 1838, and V. Gaben, *op. cit.*, pp. 355-356.

<sup>54</sup> Marseilles, M. Olive, 1838, 214 pp. The French title is *Le Manuel de dévotion aux mystères douloureux de la T.S. Vierge Marie, à l'usage des Congréganistes et des associés de N.-D. des Sept Douleurs*.

<sup>55</sup> Mazenod diary, September 16, 1838 and V. Gaben, *op. cit.*, pp. 354-375.

<sup>56</sup> Father Martin to Bishop de Mazenod, September 20, 1844, AGR, Martin file.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. V. Gaben, *op. cit.*, pp. 305-306. Bishop de Mazenod often took part in these feasts, cf. Mazenod diary, 1837-1841.

Fathers from the house at Aix do the preaching but he often had to take this apostolic work on himself.<sup>58</sup>

With the help of Father Telmon who was a member of the community from 1838 to 1841, the superior had a new main altar built and several other works, among them the niche of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, the Christ on the cross of Le Calvaire, an altar to Saint Joseph, the installation of an organ and gas lighting, etc.<sup>59</sup>

When Bishop de Mazenod invited the Oblates to express themselves on the opportunity of going to Canada, Father Aubert spoke on this matter to his community. The Fathers and Brothers unanimously approved this project. In his talk, the superior spoke of the inconveniences of this enterprise, in view of the small number of Oblates but especially brought out the advantages: "Our Congregation," he said, "is restricted to a very limited circle; for that reason it is not well known; the project very naturally offers the means to give itself a vast field for expansion; once established in America, its existence will be made known to the whole world. Clerics who want to embrace a missionary career do not come to it at all, since they think that it is destined to fulfill this ministry within a very limited territory. This obstacle which deters some, will disappear once the planned establishment becomes a reality. Beyond that, it can only result in the most propitious effects in relation to the members of the Congregation themselves; they will joyfully see their ministry open itself to a vast and beautiful panorama; through that they will be encouraged to appreciate the full grandeur of their vocation and will only be able to feel zeal for the salvation of souls grow within themselves. To sum up, this distant establishment will make us take an immense step in public opinion and will be like the beginning of a new life for the Congregation."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Mazenod diary, September 3, 1839: Courtès could not come to preach the novena at Notre Dame des Sept Douleurs, Aubert and Telmon replaced him; cf. also Mazenod diary, July 31, 1840 (Aubert preached for the feast of Blessed Alphonsus). For Vespers during the summer of 1840, Aubert gave a dialogue instruction "to keep people awake." Register of minutes of the council of Le Calvaire, July 8, 1840.

<sup>59</sup> Register of minutes of Le Calvaire in 1839-1841. They wanted to have a Christ in bronze made and with this in mind wrote to the army to obtain old artillery weapons, cf. V. Gaben, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

<sup>60</sup> Register of Le Calvaire council, July 16, 1841.

The departure ceremony for the six missionaries was celebrated at Le Calvaire on September 28, 1841.<sup>61</sup>

*Bishop de Mazenod's secretary*

In spite of all the novice master's duties, Bishop de Mazenod very soon began to request him to do secretarial work; he was officially appointed in 1837. In that year, Father Aubert was specifically called to the Chapter for the beginning of August. On the 8th, the superior general, with the capitulants' approval, named him deputy assistant general and personal secretary, the function which "the distance of Father Guibert, secretary general [elected by the chapter] did not allow him to exercise,"<sup>62</sup> since he was superior of the major seminary in Ajaccio.

If this was only a title for Father Guibert, this was a reality for the assistant secretary. For example, we know that from Paris, where he had gone to promise loyalty to King Louis-Philippe as bishop of Marseilles, Bishop de Mazenod wrote to Father Aubert, December 7, 1837, to tell him to open any letters from superiors and to reply to them to the best of his knowledge. The letters of obedience of Father Honorat for Canada of September 1841 are also signed by Father Aubert with the title of secretary.<sup>63</sup>

So many diverse activities necessarily had to distract Father Aubert from his main task at the novitiate. On May 17, 1839, Bishop de Mazenod, commenting on one of Father Bermond's letters, was sorry to realize that the novices were being neglected due to the novice-master's many occupations, but limited himself to saying: "If I could replace Father Aubert at Le Calvaire, I would send him to Notre Dame de Lumières with his novices; then he would have only them to look after."<sup>64</sup> Due to lack of members he succeeded only in partially unburdening him in July 1840 with Father Allard's appointment as assistant

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. Th. Ortolan, *Les Oblats de M. Im.* ... Paris, 1915, vol. II, p. 12.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. J. Pielorz, *Les Chapitres généraux au temps du Fondateur*, Ottawa, 1968, I, pp. 154-155.

<sup>63</sup> *Oblate Writings* 9, p. 76-77, 1, pp. 10 and 14.

<sup>64</sup> Mazenod diary May 17, 1839.

<sup>65</sup> Register of Le Calvaire council, July 31, 1840.

novice-master,<sup>65</sup> and in 1841 by sending the novices to Notre Dame de l'Osier under the direction of Father Vincens.<sup>66</sup>

Father Aubert's first years of priesthood were thus very full: novice-master, director of scholastics, professor, preacher, writer, superior, collaborator with the Superior General in governing the Congregation. He fulfilled his duties with great zeal. Father Dassy said of Father Aubert in 1834: "Ten religious like him would set the world on fire."<sup>67</sup> In a talk that he gave on the occasion of his golden jubilee of priesthood in 1882, Father Françon recalled memories of his novitiate and novice-master: he used a similar expression as that of Father Dassy: "Ten priests would scarcely have been enough to do what Father [Aubert] was doing."<sup>68</sup> Father Rey added in a short notice written at the time of Father Aubert's death: "No form of work was foreign to him and in the accomplishment of all these tasks, he knew how to reconcile religious perfection with the élan of the most ardent zeal. God soon opened before him an even wider sphere of activity and he showed himself to be equal to the mission entrusted to him."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Register of Le Calvaire council, July 2, 1841. The novitiate at Notre Dame de l'Osier had already been opened several months for the postulants from the dioceses of Grenoble and Gap.

<sup>67</sup> Father Dassy to Bishop de Mazenod, May 6, 1834. AGR, Dassy file.

<sup>68</sup> *Missions OMI* 1882, p. 358.

<sup>69</sup> A. Rey, *Le P. Casimir Aubert*, in *La Gazette du Midi*, January 19, 1860, p. 2.

**Boxed Text No. 1**

Casimir Aubert was the first Oblate to have a brother in the Congregation: Joseph-Pierre-Blaise (1814-1890). Later there were the Baret brothers (Charles and Victor), Lagier (Jean-Joseph and Lucien), Mauroit (Léon, Hector and Mansuet), etc.

Pierre Aubert entered novitiate at Billens (Switzerland) on November 1, 1830, and was ordained priest at Marseilles by Bishop de Mazenod on December 25, 1836. He performed important roles in the Congregation:

- Director of the juniorate at Notre Dame de Lumières (1840-1844)
- Superior and founder of the Red River mission (1845-1850)
- Pastor of Saint Boniface, Manitoba, and Vicar General (1845-1850)
- Vicar General of the Bytown diocese, Ottawa (1851-1856)
- Superior of Saint-Pierre-Apôtre house in Montreal (1857-1865)
- Superior of Notre Dame de Lumières (1865-1867)
- Assistant General (1867-1887)

He died at Paris on March 25, 1890 and was buried in the Oblate vault. Cf. Gaston Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique des Oblats de Marie Immaculée au Canada*, Ottawa, t. 1, 1976, pp. 34-35.



### III

## FOUNDATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANGLO-IRISH PROVINCE (1841 - 1860)

In all of the historical sources<sup>1</sup> relative to the Anglo-Irish province, Father Casimir Aubert is always referred to as the founder of this Oblate apostolic field.<sup>2</sup>

In 1837-1838 at the novitiate he had received a young Irishman, William Daly, who followed the theology course along with the scholastics at the seminary in Marseilles and was ordained to the priesthood on May 2, 1841.

During May, a few months before the decision to accept missions in Canada, an opportunity arose to send Father Daly to England to examine at first hand the possibility of a foundation. "The purpose of this trip," Bishop de Mazenod explained in his diary on July 15 and 16, 1841, "is to examine on the spot how a foundation of missionaries of our Congregation could be made in order to work for the conversion of the English heretics, and even to spread out, if there is need, and that we

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<sup>1</sup> These sources are: a) The Founder's diary (Postulation Archives at Rome) and his correspondence with the Fathers and Brothers of that province (Oblate Writings vol. 3); b) *Histoire de la maison de Penzance*, written by Father Aubert in 1843-1844, cf. *infra*, p. 217; c) *Chronique de la province d'Angleterre*, English original. The text was written at Lys Mary in 1854 and attributed to Father Gustave Richard (AGR, H a 33); d) A two-page manuscript in English, written after the publication of *Sketches of the life of Mgr de Mazenod* by Father Cooke in 1879, entitled: *An incident in the foundation of the English Province* (Father Aubert's arrival at Youghal college. AGR, file on the Anglo-Irish province: foundation. This text concludes with the words we have placed at the head of this chapter: "It was by such traits ... that Father Aubert became inseparably associated with the foundation and development of the English Province."

Except for Father Cooke in his *Sketches*, only Fathers Rey and Ortolan and, recently, Father Vincent Denny draw from these sources.

<sup>2</sup> Father Daly, the first Oblate in England in 1841-1842, never received that title; instead, in his Circular Letter of August 15, 1941, Father Theodore Labouré wrote that Father Robert Cooke is considered as a founder of the Province: "Side by side with Father Casimir Aubert, Father Robert Cooke is deservedly considered a founder of the Province."

have enough people to go to the colonies or the newly conquered places in America or any other part of the world.” (Situation of the church in England, cf. Boxed text no. 2, p. 54)

If he had already determined a vast apostolic program from the future establishment, the Founder hoped to obtain vocations in Ireland. Father Daly must have received precise orders in this sense.<sup>3</sup> He preached in several London churches, at Oscott seminary near Birmingham, then set out for Ireland where he met the bishops gathered together at the Maynooth seminary. He received permission to recruit and at the end of 1841 he sent to Marseilles seven postulants entrusted for the time being to Father Aubert;<sup>4</sup> he expressed hope that a foundation would not present any problems.

Bishop de Mazenod understood that he had to profit from this moment of grace and send, as soon as possible, a trusted man who knew English well. The choice was easy to make since Father Aubert alone fulfilled these conditions, but difficult to put into practice since he had to part with his secretary and confidant. Reason overcame the heart and the Founder made Father Aubert go, but he could not hide his suffering: “It is indeed,” he wrote to the traveller on July 27, 1842, “because you exist that my heart finds repose. I have ever thought of you as given by the Lord to be my life’s consolation and the support of my old age. ... I have nurtured many children. How many of them can I count upon to take care of me? Where is the Order or Congregation in which the Superior cannot surround himself with those who will ease the burden of his office and with whom his mind and heart will be at rest? So make no definitive plans which are apt to keep you away from me for ever. Observe, scrutinize, calculate but always leave yourself a door to escape.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In his *Histoire de la maison de Penzance*, Father Aubert wrote: “At that time we were looking only at Ireland and it was there that we intended to settle ourselves first of all.”

<sup>4</sup> Father Victor Gaben, *Chronique de la maison du Calvaire*, *op. cit.*, p. 398; Mazenod diary, November 30, 1842. Only three took the habit (Th. Meehan, Father McDonagh and John Noble; only the last one made vows).

<sup>5</sup> *Oblate Writings* 3, p. 1.



This obedience took up a great deal of Father Aubert's time and especially his concerns from that time on and too often deprived Bishop de Mazenod of his faithful secretary of the Congregation. However, he always kept "a door to escape." He never stayed for long in England. He made ten trips there and stayed in all a little less than five years between 1842 and 1857. He took the decisions concerning most of the foundations that the Oblates made in England before 1859 or the giving up of seven of them.<sup>6</sup>

He left Marseilles in mid-July 1842,<sup>7</sup> visited those responsible for the Association for the Propagation of the Faith at Lyons and Paris and, in this latter city, went to request the blessing of the Pro-Nuncio, Bishop Garibaldi. The latter conferred the title of doctor of theology<sup>8</sup> on him and gave him a letter of recommendation to Archbishop Murray of Dublin.

When he arrived at Dublin on August 8, Father Aubert was cordially received by the Archbishop and the city's mayor, Daniel O'Connell. The latter received the scapular of the Immaculate Conception and promised to protect an Oblate foundation.<sup>9</sup> On their part, the Bishops allowed recruiting.

### *Attempts to make a foundation in Ireland*

"Father Daly," as we read in *Chroniques de la province d'Angleterre*, "was endowed with a prismatic imagination which embellished everything and made every prospect appear in its most brilliant side."<sup>10</sup> No doubt carried away by Father Daly's enthusiasm and encouraged by the warm reception received at Dublin, Father Aubert

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<sup>6</sup> See Boxed Texts nos. 3 & 4, pp. 54, 55.

<sup>7</sup> Father Moreau to Father Bellon, July 12, 1842. AGR, Moreau file.

<sup>8</sup> This detail is furnished by Father Richard in his *Chroniques*, pp. [13-14]. In the correspondence of the Oblates of England Father Aubert is habitually called: "Doctor Aubert." Cf. also the letter of Bishop T. Brown of Newport to Father Aubert, September 24, 1843: "My dear Dr. Aubert." General OMI Archives at Rome, Brown file. The Pronuntio did not mention Father Aubert in his correspondence with the Vatican Secretary of State.

<sup>9</sup> Mazenod diary, September 20, 1942 and Honorat to Mazenod, November 23.

<sup>10</sup> Orig., p. 13.

**Boxed Text no. 2***Situation of the Catholic Church in England*

When the Oblates arrived in England, there were eight ecclesiastical districts: four set up by Innocent XI in 1688 (Apostolic Vicariates of London, Centre, North and West), four erected by Gregory XVI in 1840 (East, York, Lancashire and Welsh). In 1850, Pius IX reestablished the hierarchy. He formed the Archbishopric of Westminster with 12 suffragan bishoprics.

The hierarchy was set up again in Scotland in 1878. Ireland had always kept its ecclesiastical hierarchy. At that time it was divided into 27 dioceses, four of them archdioceses.

This evolution of the Catholic Church in England is explained by the Oxford movement which began about 1820 with the repeal of the laws passed against the Catholic Church in England, Ireland and the colonies, especially following the efforts of Daniel O'Connell and finally by the great immigration of Irish Catholics attracted by industry which developed greatly all through the XIXth century in England.

**Boxed Text no. 3***Father Aubert's Trips to England*

1 - 1842-1843: ca. July 15, 1842 - beginning July, 1843	12 months
2 - 1843-1844: October 1843 - end February 1844	4 months
3 - 1846: end July-mid September 1846	1½ months
4 - 1848: mid June - beginning August	1½ months
5 - 1848-1850: beginning October 1848 - beginning May 1850	19 months
6 - 1850, with the Founder: end May - mid August 1850	2½ months
7 - 1850-1851: September 1850 - April 1851	7 months
8 - 1851: June-October 1851	5 months
9 - 1855: July 15-September 15, 1855	2 months
10 - 1857, with the Founder: end June - mid August	1½ months

Total: about 55 months

**Boxed Text no. 4 Oblate houses opened in England and Ireland from 1843 to 1860.**

	1842	1843	1844	1845	1846	1847	1848	1849	1850	1851	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856	1857	1858	1859
1) Penzance																		
2) Gr��ce-Dieu																		
3) Everingham																		
4) Ashbourne																		
5) Aldenham																		
6) Maryvale																		
7) Manchester																		
8) Liverpool																		A
9) Leeds																		B
10) Sicklinghall (Lys Marie)																		C
11) Galashiels (Scotland)																		
12) Inchicore (Ireland)																		D
13) Glencree (Ireland)																		E
14) Leith (Scotland)																		F
15) Glen-Mary (Ireland)																		G

A-G = Oblate houses at the time of Father Aubert's death in 1860

soon entertained great dreams. His letters to Bishop de Mazenod have now disappeared, as well as the one he wrote to Father Honorat at Longueuil (Canada), however this Father gave a resumé of it when he wrote to Bishop de Mazenod on November 23: "Reverend Father Aubert wrote to us from Dublin," he affirmed, "to give us very consoling news which even will yield an influence here in Canada among our friends and enemies. He even promised us a man for next spring. It's encouraging to have a house with a novitiate in England and one in Ireland. Numerous candidates are expected for the novitiate. Surely God is interested in us and our dear Mother is protecting us."<sup>11</sup>

However, Father Aubert was soon disillusioned. He became aware that a formation house in Ireland would be impossible. It was not advantageous to set up near Dublin which already possessed the seminary of Maynooth and the recently-opened All Hallows College. At the end of September the Lazarist Fathers advised him to go rather in the direction of Cork in the south where the abbé Michael O'Sullivan wanted to found a seminary and even enter a Congregation consecrated to Mary. The latter shared the views of Father Aubert who would accept the costs of the establishment if it was entrusted to the Oblates. Bishop John Murphy who was favorable to the idea at first procrastinated and ended by posing such conditions that a foundation at Cork had to be abandoned.<sup>12</sup>

The Bishop of Cork, in agreement with the abbé O'Sullivan, would have wanted to maintain complete jurisdiction over the personnel and allow only those finishing who requested it to leave for foreign missions.<sup>13</sup> In his desire to establish the Oblates in Ireland, Father Aubert agreed to these conditions. Fortunately, he informed Bishop de Mazenod of these negotiations. The latter opposed it with a clear-cut refusal. If he closed an eye for the time being to the work of future priests in Ireland or elsewhere, he saw a great danger in the Bishop's other condition. "I do not understand what kind of jurisdiction this

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<sup>11</sup> AGR, Honorat file.

<sup>12</sup> Mazenod to Aubert, February 19, 1843. *Oblate Writings* 3, p. 5-6.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from O'Sullivan to Dr. Kirby, January 12, 1843. Excerpts quoted by Vincent Denny, O.M.I., *Reaching Out, History of the Oblates in the British Isles, 1841-1921*, pp. 18-22. Father Denny published several original documents about this transaction.

Prelate wishes to exercise over and above that which is granted to him by our Rules," he wrote on February 19, 1843. "I see no concession you could agree to which we might make in his favour. Is it not enough, is it not all we can accept, that we live under his obedience in regard to all exterior exercise of our ministry? ... Would he want to interfere in the internal conduct of our communities? What then? ... Nothing is more dangerous than weakening family ties. The stage will thereby be set for ominous divisions between nationalities which will end in total separation. ..."<sup>14</sup>

In order to follow this project at first hand, while allowing it to mature, Father Aubert found employment nearby. He found out that for two years two priests had been barely maintaining St. Mary's College at Youghal, destined to furnish men for the missions. He introduced himself to the superior, the abbé John Foley, and was happy to learn that the latter was an ex-religious of the Grey Brothers of Aix and had been ordained by Bishop Fortuné de Mazenod. Doctor Aubert offered his services free of charge and immediately became professor of theology, French, ceremonies and plain chant.<sup>15</sup>

All the while he was teaching and keeping up contacts with the abbé O'Sullivan, another much more advantageous possibility of an establishment presented itself. Father Aubert, in fact, learnt that the Brothers of Saint Patrick,<sup>16</sup> devoted to teaching, wanted to ally themselves with a Roman-approved Congregation. About thirty religious formed three houses in the diocese of Leiglin and Kildare, between Cork and Dublin. Father Aubert wrote to the superior, Brother Serenus, whom he knew: the latter had confessed to him during a stopover at Marseilles on his way to Rome. The Brother enthusiastically welcomed the proposition and invited Father Aubert, who visited the various houses in December 1842. Later he visited Bishop Healy of the diocese who received him cordially, listened attentively to his propositions but, unhappy with the Brothers whom he accused of wanting to free

<sup>14</sup> *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 5-6.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Chroniques*, *op. cit.*, pp. [14] and [15]. On September 20, 1823, Bishop Fortuné de Mazenod ordained Jean Foley from "the diocese of Aix," cf. Ordination Register. Marseilles Archdiocesan Archives. In a letter of November 4, 1817, Father de Mazenod spoke of the Grey Brothers or the Fathers of Christian Retreat, founded by Father Receveur. *Oblate Writings* 6, pp. 44-46.

<sup>16</sup> Founded by Bishop Delaney in 1808.

themselves from his jurisdiction,<sup>17</sup> refused every approach and arrangement.

After staying several months in Ireland, Fathers Aubert and Daly observed that the bishops, jealous of their authority, didn't appear to be disposed to allow a new Congregation to be established. However, they had made known the Oblates and made friends with several important people, notably the superiors of the Major Seminary of Maynooth and of the Youghal College. These latter promised to direct some of their students to the Oblates. They kept their word. Postulants left regularly for Marseilles or for the formation houses opened later in England. More than 150 Irish and several Englishmen took the habit of the Congregation before 1861.<sup>18</sup>

### *Foundation of Penzance in 1843*

Thus doors remained closed for an establishment in Ireland.<sup>19</sup> Father Aubert didn't follow immediately the advice Bishop de Mazenod had given him to leave a door open to leave the country. He taught at Youghal until March 1843. In the meantime a new proposal came up, this time in England.

Alerted by Father Daly, then at Dublin, Father Aubert learned that the abbé William Young had opened a mission for Irish emigrants in the

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<sup>17</sup> The Brothers had already asked Roman approval and, being too few to obtain it, had wanted to join the Augustinians.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Register for the taking of the habit. AGR. 4 Irish took the habit in 1841 (Noble, Meehan, McDonagh and undoubtedly Walsh whose name is not in the register); 4 in 1843 (Robert Cooke, Grey, Bradshaw and Keating); 2 in 1845 ((Roger Cooke, Dunne); 2 in 1846 (Murphy and Linehan) and 3 in 1847 (Moloney, Naghten and Murray). After little success with the men of 1841, Bishop de Mazenod asked Father Aubert to test the postulants there (Mazenod Diary, November 30, 1842); *idem* in 1844, cf. *Oblate Writings* 3, p. 8 After Father Leonard's recruitment tour in 1846-1848 and the arrival of numerous novices at l'Osier and Nancy, Irish postulants made their novitiate in England.

<sup>19</sup> Father Ortolan (I, 521) said that Father Aubert proposed an establishment at Limerick and "met the same unsurmountable obstacles there." The name of this city does not appear in the Founder's writings nor in Father Richard's *Chronicles*, but it is sure that Father Aubert did not waste any opportunity. We have on record a letter from Bishop Wareing of Northampton in England. He wrote to him on March 7, 1843: "Having a great opinion of your holy Institute and the benefit it would produce in my desolate district ... but, alas, ... I have no means of founding a house." Wareing file.

city of Penzance in the far southwest of England. At the end of 1842 he was taking collections at Dublin in view of constructing a church already begun. He said that he was disposed to entrust this mission to the Oblates. Father Aubert immediately went to meet the abbé Young and resolved to write to Bishop Baines, Vicar Apostolic of the western district which included Penzance. The reply was negative. The Vicar Apostolic was scarcely favorable to religious, especially since the Rosminians, recently established in the college of his city of Prior Park, had already left, taking with them several of the best students.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, Father Aubert, accustomed to this kind of refusal, did not concede defeat; he recommended the matter to the Blessed Virgin and left for Prior Park. He won the Bishop over to the project, all the easier since Bishop Baines, on a trip to Rome had received "noble hospitality" at the Bishop's house in Marseilles where Bishop de Mazenod had "treated him very kindly in a distinguished manner."<sup>21</sup>

With the Bishop's blessing and all the faculties needed, Father Aubert immediately returned to Dublin, making a detour through Penzance. There he met once again the abbé Young and together with him took the most appropriate measures to lead the new-born enterprise forward. He was especially happy to find at last a fixed home for Father Daly who had been more or less a wanderer for a year and a half. In mid January 1843, the latter arrived at Penzance with a postulant. A vast field was opening up to his zeal.

On Good Friday, Father Aubert, along with some postulants,<sup>22</sup> joined them. He shared in their poverty and work up until his return to France to take part in the General Chapter of July 1843. He himself told about the kind of apostolic works at Penzance and their success both among Catholics and Protestants, but also the large sums needed to pay the abbé Young's debts, complete the church construction, and procure living quarters for himself.<sup>23</sup> Bishop de Mazenod, the Society of the

<sup>20</sup> Father Richard, *Chroniques* ... p. [15].

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Aubert wrote: "with a postulant," cf. *Histoire de la maison de Penzance*, p. [12]; Father Richard, *Chroniques*, p. [15], names 4 of them: "Cooke Robert, Bradshaw, Keating and Grey." The last three accompanied Father Aubert to France at the beginning of July 1843, cf. Register of entries to novitiate 1816-1850.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Histoire de la maison de Penzance*, p. [11-15].

Propagation of the Faith and other benefactors, like Daniel O'Connell, showed themselves to be generous as well as the abbé Young who, during the summer, granted the property to Father Daly by an act of transfer done before a notary public.<sup>24</sup>

Father Aubert returned to England in October. He assisted Father Daly in ministry, took care of the novices<sup>25</sup> and ascertained, it seems, that the Bishop of Cork and the abbé O'Sullivan upheld their conditions for a foundation in that diocese.<sup>26</sup>

Before leaving Penzance, he made a canonical visit and wrote up the act that we still have. He invited Father Daly to live according to the Rule and not omit pious exercises, especially "oraïson which is the soul of spiritual life." He recommended poverty which "is the most solid basis for God's works." He recalled the obligation to become holy through the duties of his assignment as pastor among Catholics first of all, then among converts and Protestants. Finally, he advised maintaining relations with the Redemptorists of Falmouth and then with Ireland "to attract some young people from there."<sup>27</sup>

The founder of the Oblate mission in England returned to France in February 1844 aware that he had given birth to a fragile endeavor possibly without a future since the Irish bishops did not believe in the good "dispositions of the English people to return to the truth of the Catholic faith. In any case," Bishop de Mazenod wrote on February 1st, 1844, "we will keep the mission of Penzance however small it may be and our dear Father Daly will continue to be in charge of it."<sup>28</sup> He stayed there,

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<sup>24</sup> It seems that the donation was made at two moments: in the summer of 1843 and June 1846. Cf. *Hist. de la maison de Penzance*, pp. [13-14] and V. Denny, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>25</sup> Ortolan said that Father Aubert brought novices with him when he returned to France in 1844. (I. p. 53)

<sup>26</sup> According to a letter of 1845, quoted by Father Denny, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22, the abbé O'Sullivan was still hoping to reach an agreement. Three of the Founder's letters of February and March 1844 allow us to verify that. Among other things he wrote: "The last journey that I had Father Aubert accomplish will make it plain that when it is a question of the glory of God and the salvation of souls, we do not stop at any expense or any trouble." *Oblate Writings* 3, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> Act of Visitation, 1844. AGR, Anglo-Irish Province file, Penzance.

<sup>28</sup> *Oblate Writings* 3, p. 7.



the only Oblate, for two years, assisted by the abbé Michael Power who joined him.

When he returned to France, Father Aubert spent six months at N.D. de l'Osier as assistant novice master for the Irish. During the summer he also taught moral theology to the novices and literature to the scholastics who spent several weeks of their holidays at the novitiate.<sup>29</sup>

### *Canonical Visitations of 1846 and 1848*

By the letter of July 15, 1846, the Superior General named Father Aubert Canonical Visitor of the Oblate houses in England.<sup>30</sup> He was supposed to go with several Fathers and Brothers, visit the houses of Penzance and Grâce-Dieu, and examine a request for a foundation at Ashby.

Actually, the Congregation had developed rapidly in England in two years. In the spring of 1845, Fathers F. Perron,<sup>31</sup> E. Bradshaw and the scholastic brother, J. Naughten, had finally rejoined Father Daly at Penzance allowing them to make a foundation at Grâce-Dieu.

Father Aubert started with Penzance where he made the visit from August 6-12, 1846. He named Father Daly superior, assisted by Father Bradshaw, Brother Naughten a deacon, and Brother Dowling.<sup>32</sup> He found everything in perfect order except the various community registers and the lay school teacher who did not seem qualified to educate sixty children. He noticed that numerous faithful came to the services at Penzance and the localities of Helston, Saint Just and Prussia Cove, where the Fathers served. The Visitor who had left Penzance and England two years earlier with little hope of seeing this apostolic field develop was amazed and overjoyed with the intervening changes. "It is impossible," he wrote, "not to recognize above all that the hand of God

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<sup>29</sup> Letters from Mazenod to Aubert, from March to July 1844. *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 9-15.

<sup>30</sup> This visit was already considered at the General Council of May 6 and June 22.

<sup>31</sup> Ortolan (I, 532) seems to say that he arrived in 1844, but according to a letter from Bishop de Mazenod to Father Vincens Father Perron left on May 12, 1845. *Oblate Writings* 10, p. 104.

<sup>32</sup> This Brother had already made vows and had not made his novitiate in France.

manifested itself in a tangible way in everything concerning our establishment at Penzance. It is impossible to refrain from a profound feeling of admiration and gratitude to divine Providence for all that has been done in favor of this mission. What a difference between its present state and what it was at the beginning.”<sup>33</sup>

After that he went to Grâce-Dieu in Leicester county but didn't make the canonical visitation of that house until the time of his departure, from August 24-27th. Mr. Ambrose Phillipps de Lisle, a rich convert, had built several chapels, one of them at Grâce-Dieu near his manor and the other at Whitwick. In 1844 his wife had met Bishop de Forbin-Janson who had spoken to her about the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.<sup>34</sup> After meeting Father Daly and obtaining the permission of Bishop Wiseman, at that time coadjutor of the Vicar Apostolic of the Centre, Mr. Ambrose asked Bishop de Mazenod for Oblates. At the beginning of September 1845, Father Perron, the abbé Coussinier of Marseilles, Brother Naughten and Brother Bayeul arrived there. In his act of Visitation,<sup>35</sup> Father Aubert praised Mr. Ambrose who “took care of everything with a generosity worthy of every accolade”: chapels, school and the Priests' house.<sup>36</sup> He named Father Perron superior of the community, made up of Fathers Robert Cooke, A. Tamburini, scholastic brother J. Noble and Brother Bayeul.

Bishop Thomas Walsh, the Vicar Apostolic for the central district, wished to entrust a mission to the Oblates in the city of Ashby, not far from Grâce-Dieu. Bishop de Mazenod expressed his wish for the success of this foundation in a letter to Father Aubert on August 7th. However, the city had no church. The Vicar Apostolic, rather poor,

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<sup>33</sup> Act of Visitation at Penzance, June 16, 1846. AGR.

<sup>34</sup> Mrs. Phillipps de Lisle often spoke of the Oblates in her diary. She called them Conceptionists, the name under which they were known in England in the last century, cf. V. Denny, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30. Charles de Forbin Janson (1785-1844) was Bishop of Nancy from 1824 to 1844, but worked very little in his diocese, especially after 1830, due to his opposition to the government of Louis-Philippe. He preached in several countries before founding the Society of the Holy Childhood in 1843.

<sup>35</sup> AGR, Anglo-Irish Province, Grâce-Dieu.

<sup>36</sup> Mazenod to Aubert, August 7, 1846: “I share the feelings which are aroused in you by the charming locality of Grâce-Dieu. It will suit our Fathers marvellously well,” *Oblate Writings* 3, p. 21.

undoubtedly asked Father Aubert to take upon himself the building of a chapel and to procure for himself a place to live, through his own means. This project had no follow-up.<sup>37</sup>

In the acts of the General Council of May and June 1846 it is said that the Visitor would only be away for several weeks. In fact, his trip lasted six or seven weeks. Once again, he signed the acts of the Council for September 18th, those of 1847 and of 1848 until May 24th. During that time the Oblates took charge of a new field of apostolate at Everingham in York county. Mr. Maxwell, a rich Catholic, had built a large, beautiful church near his manor and a house for the missionaries, called Park Priory. As a witness to the zeal of the Oblates at Gr  ce-Dieu, he asked Bishop de Mazenod for missionaries, encouraged in this by Bishop Briggs, Vicar Apostolic of the county. Several Fathers and Brothers arrived there in November 1847 under Father Perron's direction. However, he contracted typhus and died at Everingham on February 22, 1848 after an illness of sixteen days.<sup>38</sup> This event hastened the Oblates' departure from Gr  ce-Dieu where, besides, for some time already, Mr. Ambrose had become too demanding, among other things wanting a Father to live at his manor under the title of chaplain.

Much was said about England in the General Council's session of May 24, 1848. Taking advantage of an opportunity, Father Daly had just acquired a valuable piece of property at Ashbourne in Derby county in the central part of England. In a letter of April 12, 1848, he spoke of this acquisition and announced that he would make it the central house of the Congregation in the country, with novitiate and scholasticate. Surprised and unsettled, the Founder convoked the Council. They decided to name Father Charles Bellon responsible for the missions in England after the fashion of Father Guigues in Canada and to immediately send Father Aubert as Visitor Extraordinary.

He left about mid June and set out for Ashbourne where Fathers Daly and Trudeau already were. After that he made the canonical

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<sup>37</sup> On July 6, Bishop de Mazenod had written to Mister Jess   of the Society of the Propagation of the Faith to present the needs of the Oblate missions, of Ashby in particular. *Oblate Writings* 5, p. 202.

<sup>38</sup> Mazenod to Court  s, February 26, 1848, to Vincens, February 27, 1848. *Oblate Writings* 10, pp. 212-216.

visitation of Everingham from June 30 to July 3, where he named Father Robert Cooke superior of the community, made up of Fathers Noble, Tamburini, Grey, four scholastics and two Brothers. He observed that at Everingham they had the best house in England and that "the generous dispositions of Mister Maxwell on which this foundation rests are a certain guarantee that our Fathers, far from having anything to fear from a material point of view, will rather need to be on guard against going beyond the simplicity and poverty which ought always to be one of the distinctive marks of a religious house."<sup>39</sup>

In the Act of Visitation of Penzance, carried out from July 10 to 13, 1848, Father Aubert wrote that Father Daly, absent, remained the local superior of the community, composed of Fathers E. Bradshaw, P. Walsh, P. Hickey, Brother Dowling and Gabert, a novice. He noticed that the material situation had made evident progress and that the mission "continues to advance on solid ground and to develop whether in Penzance or in the neighboring areas. ... Their ministry is marked by the double character which must accompany it: commitment and prudence."<sup>40</sup>

Having departed with an inflammation of the throat, Father Aubert informed Bishop de Mazenod of his arrival in England but gave no further news since he intended to return to Marseilles before the end of July. Disturbed by this silence and filled with "dark presentiments," Bishop de Mazenod wrote on July 17: "I imagined that you had contracted typhus, like Father Perron, in some carriage filled with those germs."

The Superior General had good reason to harbor "dark presentiments." However, the unexpected source was not Father Aubert's health but the irregular and devastating transaction Father Daly had just concluded at Ashbourne. Without permission, he had bought property costing 222,000 francs, using as collateral the titles to the Penzance properties of which he was owner in the Congregation's name. What was more, the dishonest seller had unburdened himself of lands and especially an immense house at a price well above their value; the house, lacking a good foundation, was uninhabitable.<sup>41</sup> How could they

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<sup>39</sup> Acts of Visitation, 1848. AGR, Anglo-Irish Province file, Everingham.

<sup>40</sup> Acts of Visitation, 1848, AGR, Anglo-Irish Province file, Penzance.

<sup>41</sup> Concerning this matter of Ashbourne, cf. Orlolan I, 572-574 and the Founder's letter to the Propagation of the Faith, April 15, 1853. *Oblate Writings* 5, pp. 259-260.

afford such an amount at a time when the Congregation was falling into debt to support its many novices and scholastics? Besides that, they could scarcely count on help from the Propagation of the Faith whose revenues were decreasing during the 1848 Revolution.

When he returned, Father Aubert gave an account of his mission to the Council Meeting of August 7, 1948. That sitting must have been rather stormy. They decided to send Father Aubert back immediately as superior of Ashbourne and also with the mandate to establish in England the Oblate Sisters of Mary Immaculate, founded by Father Vincens at Notre Dame de l'Osier. The Founder opposed this new departure. In the minutes of this council meeting we read: the Bishop "concluded by consenting to that arrangement, provided Father Aubert be assigned only temporarily to this work."

What really happened? Father Aubert did not leave but rather Father Bellon, following the decisions of the Council on May 24. The Founder wrote to him on September 15, saying that "God has not blessed this acquisition made in spite of the prescription of our holy Rules." On October 18, he named Father Bellon superior of the Ashbourne house and of the Oblates in England.<sup>42</sup>

Father Aubert in turn left at the beginning of October in the capacity of Canonical Visitor.<sup>43</sup> He stayed there about twenty months.

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Once he had arrived at Ashbourne in July 1848, Father Aubert seems to have seen especially the positive side of this acquisition. He wrote in this vein to Father Magnan in Corsica. We still have the reply of the latter. Among other things, Father Magnan says: "So you are an Englishman now! That ought to be enough to reconcile my heart with this hardly merry isle; since you are only passing through now, I shall wait until you have planted the Provincial's banner in this perfidious Albion before I dedicate a good part of my heart to it; until then I will only grant it a passing and quite reserved affection. ... According to your letter, it seems that all is not rose-coloured in the middle of the ocean, no more than it is in the middle of the Mediterranean. Lots of trouble and little success, you say. Too bad! I thought that was the privileged lot of Corsica. I am delighted at the new bond of fraternity evident between us. This is a bit problematical, however, for you have a powerful lever that lifts the world: gold, with that a firm model of 200,000 francs ...", etc. Magnan to Aubert, October 13, 1848.

<sup>42</sup> *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 29-31.

<sup>43</sup> He signed the minutes of the Council meetings of September 23 and October 2, 1848 but his name does not appear any more until September 2, 1850.

*A long sojourn which gave new élan to the Province (1848-1850)*

The trip made in 1848-1850 can be considered as important as that of 1842-1843. After the inevitable slowness and gropings of the first years, the Congregation was going to take, from that time on, the configuration that it kept after that. From that time Father Aubert was able to rely on a good team of collaborators and councillors, such as Fathers Bellon and Cooke and especially Daly. He had to curtail somewhat the projects which arose from the spirit of initiative and relations of the latter. They took three main decisions: to open the formation house at Maryvale, to accept new foundations no longer close to the castles in the English countryside but in the midst of Catholics in the large working-class cities,<sup>44</sup> and to preach parish missions.

As soon as he arrived Father Aubert was very active. Passing through London he met Bishop Wiseman, recently named auxiliary, and offered the services of the Oblates. The latter replied on November 21, 1848 that he had no parish or important work to entrust to the Congregation.<sup>45</sup> The Visitor likewise hoped to make a foundation at Dublin, where, it seems, someone was offering them an establishment.<sup>46</sup>

*Maryvale.* When Father Aubert arrived at Everingham, he looked for a house for novices and scholastics. The one at Park Priory was unable to welcome the community and Oblates in formation<sup>47</sup> who could no longer be sent to France. Father Leonard's round of recruitment in the seminaries of France and Belgium had filled the formation houses. Thus, the time had come to open an important formation house in England for Irish men as well as for scholastics from France destined for the missions.

On a temporary basis they acquired St. Mary's Monastery near Everingham to where, at the end of December, Father Bellon transferred

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<sup>44</sup> That is what Bishop de Mazenod wanted, cf. *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 48, 49, 50.

<sup>45</sup> Bishop Wiseman to Father Aubert, November 21, 1848. AGR, Wiseman file.

<sup>46</sup> Mazenod to Guigues, March 4, 1849. *Oblate Writings* 2, p. 210. We have on hand two letters written in 1849 by Ed. O'Connell from All Hallows to Doctor Aubert in which this future novice spoke of the plan for an establishment for Oblates and Oblate Sisters of Mary Immaculate at Dunderry and of missions to be preached in Ireland. AGR.

<sup>47</sup> Fifteen made their annual retreat there at the beginning of December, 1848, cf. Orlolan I, p. 550.

with Father Soulerin and the students. Soon after, Bishop Ullathorne offered to rent the Oblates the former diocesan seminary at Maryvale, near Birmingham. Father Aubert gratefully accepted it and sent the novices and scholastics there in May 1849.<sup>48</sup>

*Aldenham.* Bishop G.B. Ullathorne, recently appointed Apostolic Vicar of the central region, had known the Oblates at Penzance. In 1848 he offered them an establishment at Aldenham, near Shrewsbury, a city of 20,000 inhabitants. Fathers Fox, Rouisse and Dutertre were sent there and didn't hesitate to spread out into several other small neighboring cities.<sup>49</sup>

*Manchester.* In 1849 the Apostolic Vicar offered Father Aubert Saint Patrick's chapel at Manchester, at that time an industrial city of 300,000 people, including already 80,000 Catholics, mostly poor Irish immigrants. Father Aubert, superior and pastor, and Fathers W. Daly, P. Grey, S. Walsh and J. Noble began their ministry in August.<sup>50</sup>

*Liverpool.* In 1850, Bishop Th. J. Brown called the Oblates to Liverpool, then the second city in Great Britain with 400,000 people, more than 100,000 Catholics. He entrusted to them Holy Ghost parish near the port where thousands of Irish were working. The Visitor did not resist that call, and on January 18, 1850, sent Father Noble whom people of that city already knew since he had preached a mission there at the end of the preceding year.<sup>51</sup>

*Parish Missions.* When he accepted the Manchester and Liverpool parishes in those milieux where numerous Irish Catholics were living, often little practising due to lack of pastors, Father Aubert decided that the moment had come to preach parish missions according to the prin-

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<sup>48</sup> Ortolan I, 558-560; Mazenod to Aubert, February 24, 1849. *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 33-34. At its meeting of July 8, the General Council approved this acquisition. It was said there that Father General "informed the Council that he was going to choose the most capable Fathers so as to entrust them with this important mission which Father Aubert had prepared with wisdom and perseverance." He sent Fathers Arnoux, Jolivet, Tortel and several Irish scholastics who were still in France. Mazenod to the Propagation of the Faith, May 23, 1850, *Oblate Writings* 5, p. 229.

<sup>49</sup> Ortolan I, 554-557; Denny, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-41.

<sup>50</sup> Soon after they opened another preaching centre at Neston Heath, cf. Ortolan I, 561-563; Denny, pp. 51-53.

<sup>51</sup> Ortolan I, pp. 564-565; Denny, pp. 53-60.

principal aim and customs of the Congregation. He accepted the proposal of the parish priest of Saint Anne parish, in the centre of Manchester city. Together with Fathers Cooke and Noble, he gave a three-week mission in October 1849. It was successful.<sup>52</sup>

When Fathers Aubert, Egan and Noble arrived at Liverpool in 1850, they likewise gave a mission according to rule from mid-February to Easter. For this district it was a resurrection. At the same time, Father Cooke undertook a similar work at Huddersfield in York county. The latter and most of the Oblates of England and Ireland preached numerous missions following that.<sup>53</sup>

The Visitor's sojourn lasted longer than foreseen. In autumn 1849, Bishop de Mazenod often complained of his absence. "Father Aubert is still in England where his presence is considered necessary, and it is that which is crushing me with work," he wrote on November 10.<sup>54</sup> "What a scene my desk is! At this moment, there are at least 150 letters,"<sup>55</sup> he added in a letter to Father Aubert on November 24. He asked him to dispose "things in such a way that Father Cooke could be assigned as superior of our mission in England" so that he could soon recall his secretary and Father Bellon whose ill health did not allow him to remain at Maryvale.

Father Aubert left an Act of Visitation dated January 10, 1850, and then with Father Bellon returned to Marseilles during the first two weeks of May,<sup>56</sup> but he only returned to leave again with the Superior General who had finally decided to visit his sons in England.

### *Trip with Bishop de Mazenod in the summer of 1850.*

This trip which took place from May 27 to mid August is well known. Bishop de Mazenod gave an account of it in several letters and

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<sup>52</sup> We have an extract of Father Aubert's letter to Bishop de Mazenod regarding this mission, cf. *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 47-48 in a footnote.

<sup>53</sup> About these missions, cf. Ortolan I, pp. 564-565, 575; Denny, pp. 116-118.

<sup>54</sup> Mazenod to Semeria, November 10, 1849. He wrote to him again on January 17, 1850: "Father Aubert's absence has left me alone to bear all the weight of correspondence which is more than my strength can bear." *Oblate Writings* 4, pp. 41 and 47.

<sup>55</sup> *Oblate Writings* 3, p. 45.

<sup>56</sup> Father Aubert was not yet present at the Council meeting of May 6, 1850.



left a precise Act of Visitation on his impressions and the state of the Congregation in England.<sup>57</sup>

The travelers went through Belgium and disembarked at Ostende on June 17. They arrived at London in the afternoon of the 18 and visited the rich districts with Lord Arundel, and then, alone, the poor districts of the docks.<sup>58</sup> From there they visited Birmingham, Maryvale, Everingham, Aldenham, Liverpool, Manchester, and on July 27 they took the boat for Dover to return to Marseilles several days before the General Chapter which opened on August 26.

During this trip Father Aubert remained discreet but, always precise, he acted in such a way that departures could be made without loss of time. That is when the Founder spoke of the "exact planning" of his traveling companion.<sup>59</sup>

#### *A painful sojourn (September 1850-April 1851)*

Scarcely had he returned to Marseilles where he took part in the Council meeting of September 2, and then left again for England to support and console the Fathers at the time of the "bomb explosion which burst over us." By this expression the Founder wanted to speak of the Ashbourne affair which he had now to straighten out.

The Oblates had been exercising ministry at Ashbourne since 1848 without residing in the house, bought at that time but not paid for. A court case between the previous owners gave some hope that they could rescind the contract signed by Father Daly. The case ended in 1850 and the seller demanded payment. They had decided not to pay anything and attempt some agreement with him. In vain Father Aubert tried to do that. The owner then took back his property and kept as well the titles to the Penzance property given as collateral.

The church and rectory at Penzance were put up for sale. The Bishop of Plymouth bought them back in September 1852 and assigned the parish to a diocesan priest.

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<sup>57</sup> *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 55-64, 185-194; Ortolan I, pp. 566-571 and Denny, pp. 60-62.

<sup>58</sup> Later the Oblates settled there.

<sup>59</sup> Mazenod to Tempier, July 1, 1850, *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 58-60.

When Father Aubert left Manchester several months later he left among others Father Daly. The latter, whose administrative prudence did not match his apostolic zeal, had just purchased several pieces of property and planned to build a church. "What audacity this poor Father Daly had ..., wrote the Founder at that time, to make the deal and plan the construction at Manchester. ... Good God! What aberration!"<sup>60</sup>

Then the Founder considered expelling Father Daly from the Congregation, an eventuality which would not please Father Aubert, a friend of Father Daly to whom furthermore fell much of the merits for the foundation and the work accomplished. That proximate separation from a friend and collaborator and such a miserable abandonment of Penzance, the first Oblate establishment in England, was a severe trial for Father Aubert. In November, he wrote two letters in which he did not hide his sadness nor even his discouragement. Bishop de Mazenod reassured him. "The sole thought of the grief you were enduring grieved me as much and more than the losses that we were going to suffer," he replied on December 6. So the position is frightful but nevertheless not as desperate as you represent it to me. Since there is no remedy, let us pay the price of our happy-go-lucky mien while enduring the shame which more or less falls upon us as well as the loss of our properties. But look at the extent of our misfortune. Nothing has changed in our establishments. You will perhaps be surprised, my dear son, to see the calmness of this letter following the violent emotion that I necessarily had to feel on (receiving) the one to which I am replying. This calmness is the result first of my resignation to the will of God in the face of misfortunes from which no human wisdom can extricate us. ... You will have to concentrate on sustaining the morale of all your people of very cogent reasons capable of influencing souls the least bit generous. One would be unworthy to belong to God and the Church if one let oneself be laid low by tribulation with which the demon afflicts precisely those whom he fears the most."<sup>61</sup>

Father Aubert returned to Marseilles in the spring of 1851 with the following proposals<sup>62</sup>: the Oblates would abandon Penzance and

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<sup>60</sup> *Oblate Writings* 3, p. 64-65.

<sup>61</sup> *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 65-66: the same serenity in the letter dated December 24, p. 67.

<sup>62</sup> Father Aubert made no decisions at that time. The Founder still hoped to buy back Penzance for 20 or 25,000 francs. *Oblate Writings* 3, p. 77.

Ashbourne besides leaving the Manchester parish to Father Daly who would join the diocesan clergy.<sup>63</sup> When he stopped over in England a few months later on his trip to Canada, Father Tempier agreed with that solution,<sup>64</sup> and that was what was done.

*Provincial (June-October 1851)*

The 1850 General Chapter had decided to divide the Congregation into Provinces. After Bishop de Mazenod's and Father Tempier's trip to Rome at the beginning of 1851 to have the changes to the Rule approved, the Council meeting of April 23-24 appointed Father Aubert Provincial of France North. But, while passing through England in May, Father Tempier decided that he was still indispensable in that country. The Superior General replied on May 27: "We must with a stroke of the pen demolish what we have built with so much trouble. ... No doubt Father Aubert is the man most suitable for the province of England for a thousand reasons we all know." On May 30, he confided to Father Vincens: "The English Bishops and all our Fathers are crying out" for Father Aubert's presence in that Province.<sup>65</sup>

Thus the Council meeting of July 2 made a change in the previously taken decisions and named Father Aubert Provincial of the Oblates in England. He had already been there since June.<sup>66</sup> As Provincial, he redistributed the personnel, dealt with Bishop Briggs concerning the establishment of the Oblates in Saint Mary's parish in Leeds, where they arrived in October,<sup>67</sup> continued to busy himself with the Daly affair,

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<sup>63</sup> The Bishop appreciated the work of Father Daly who was happier at Manchester than at Ashbourne. For a good price, he resold the purchased property for the needs of a Catholic cemetery; thus he was able to build a beautiful church, cf. Denny, *op. cit.*, p. 52. As to his personal situation, it took some time to make a definitive decision. At the Council meeting of May 27, 1851, they gave up the idea of expelling him and proposed to recall him to France and later to send him to America or Africa, a plan that he refused, cf. *Oblate Writings* 3, p. 79. Finally, in June, 1853, the Founder wrote that he will be expelled "so that all England will know [it]," cf. *Oblate Writings* 3, p. 87, note 3. They readmitted him into the Congregation before he died.

<sup>64</sup> *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 73-74.

<sup>65</sup> *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 78-79, vol. 11, p. 36.

<sup>66</sup> *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 78-80. He was not present at the Council meetings from July to October 1851.

<sup>67</sup> Ortolan I, p. 579. The chapel was inaugurated on October 22, 1851.

decided to abandon Maryvale,<sup>68</sup> where the rent and upkeep was too costly, and to transfer the novices and scholastics to Sicklinghall in a vast piece of property offered by Mr. Middleton, a rich Catholic.<sup>69</sup>

The Provincial thought he should stay in England and take up residence at Liverpool.<sup>70</sup> Did Bishop de Mazenod doubt about the regularity of the Oblates in England at that time? On August 28, he recommended that the provincial be more firm. "Hitherto on this point, you have been pushing condescension to the point of weakness," he wrote. "If you do not change your policy, regularity will be done away with for good amongst our Fathers in England"<sup>71</sup> Soon the Superior General realized that Father Aubert's presence near him had become indispensable. He recalled him in October.<sup>72</sup> The latter came back immediately, leaving Father Cooke there under the title of Vice-Provincial.<sup>73</sup>

### *The Last Two Trips (1855-1857)*

From the end of 1851 to his death in 1860, Father Aubert was present at all the General Council meetings but still made two short trips to Great Britain. He always remained the preferred correspondent of the Fathers and Brothers of that Province.<sup>74</sup>

In 1852-1853, Father Bellon spent a year in England with the title of Visitor.<sup>75</sup> In 1852, he made the final arrangements with Bishop Gillis for the founding of Galashiels in Scotland, where Mister James Hope, with an inheritance from Sir Walter Scott, had built a church and a house as living quarters which he entrusted to the Oblates.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Bishop de Mazenod consented but regretted having to close this house, cf. *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 73-74, 78-80.

<sup>69</sup> Ortolan I, pp. 589-590.

<sup>70</sup> Mazenod to Aubert, August 28, 1851, *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 81-82.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* p. 82.

<sup>72</sup> He was present for the Council meetings of November 13 and 20.

<sup>73</sup> He had already been named Vice-Provincial at the Council meeting of April 23-24, 1851.

<sup>74</sup> We have several letters to Aubert from Fathers Arnoux, Amisse, Crousel, Daly, Dutertre, Ryan, Winter, from Bishop Gillis in Scotland, etc.

<sup>75</sup> *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 87-90, 101-103.

<sup>76</sup> Ortolan I, 591-596; Denny, pp. 78-84.

Through his letter of July 15, 1855, the Superior General once more sent Father Aubert to England as Canonical Visitor. He wrote: "Given that the English province of our Congregation, founded by your most particular care, has ... made such progress as to make evident from day to day its aptness to promote the glory of God and procure the salvation of souls, especially by their conversion from errors, we deem it fitting this day to send you to England in order to visit to the utmost profit houses of the said province. ..." <sup>77</sup>

He was sent to close the house at Everingham<sup>78</sup> to allow more Fathers to become involved in missions and retreats and to go to Dublin in view of a foundation. In fact, during his trip to Rome in December 1854 to attend the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Bishop de Mazenod had met several Irish bishops and repeated his desire to establish the Oblates in that Catholic country that Father Aubert called "a classical land of love and attachment to the Church's faith." The Visitor went there in 1855 but his trip still had no success. Father Cooke succeeded the year after to preach a mission at Dublin and obtain a parish at Inchicore.

Father Aubert visited the five Oblate houses: Liverpool, Leeds, Sicklinghall, Galashiels and Everingham and, on August 31, completed a long and detailed visit. We learn from it, among other things, that the Congregation owned only one house, that of Sicklinghall. He ended with a vigorous appeal and precise directives about regularity.<sup>79</sup>

Father Aubert made his tenth and last trip to the United Kingdom to accompany Bishop de Mazenod from June 28 to the end of August 1857. The latter wished especially to thank the Archbishop of Dublin for having allowed the Oblates to establish themselves there. He also wanted to be present at the blessing of the church at Leeds built by the Oblates.

The travellers stopped several days at London where they met the Duke of Norfolk and several other Lords, then soon came to Dublin by way of Birmingham and Liverpool. From there they went to Leeds for

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<sup>77</sup> *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 109-110.

<sup>78</sup> Act of Visitation of Mazenod to Aubert, August 9, 1855. *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 110-111.

<sup>79</sup> Act of Visitation of the English province, 1855. AGR.

the church blessing on July 29, stayed several days at the scholasticate of Lys Mary at Sickinghall, went to Edinburgh and Galashiels in Scotland and returned to France.<sup>80</sup>

The Founder left an Act of Visitation of the Inchicore community.<sup>81</sup> During the trip he wrote several letters to Marseilles in which he spoke of his visits, the politeness of the Bishops and Lords, the faith and piety of the faithful, the good functioning of Oblate communities and their works, the perfect organization of transports and the speed of the trains. He was especially surprised to make a mile a minute going to Scotland: "It is somewhat violent speeding at twenty leagues an hour."<sup>82</sup> In this regard he mentioned Father Aubert on several occasions. "It is a science, that of the railways of England and Fr. Aubert is a proven master in the subject," he confided to Father Tempier; he is "invaluable for expeditions of this sort."<sup>83</sup>

Bishop de Mazenod only complained once. Having pity on his Superior's 75 years, Father Aubert arranged it so that he could rest two hours at Birmingham on his way to Liverpool. "He claimed that it was in order that I might not be too tired to continue on our way to Liverpool without rest but I, who did not feel tired in the least, had the cruelty to upbraid him over this delay because, once I have set out, I desire most of all to arrive."<sup>84</sup>

Father Aubert continued to be concerned with the Anglo-Irish province up to his death in 1860. We have on hand eight of his letters, for 1858-1859, to some Fathers of that province and several of theirs.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ortolan I, pp. 608-613.

<sup>81</sup> *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 192-194.

<sup>82</sup> *Oblate Writings* 3, p. 138.

<sup>83</sup> *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 125, 136.

<sup>84</sup> *Oblate Writings* 3, p. 126.

<sup>85</sup> Letters from Father Aubert, cf. *Infra*. nos. 29, 31, 42, 50, 52, 53, 54 and 56; Letters from Fathers J. Arnoux, Ayral, Pr. Boisramé and Gubbins. In a letter to Bishop de Mazenod of August 31, 1855, Father Fox called Father Aubert: "your Lordship's vice gerent and the Founder of the English Province of Oblates." On May 18, 1858, Brother Ayral also wrote to the Founder: "I noticed that Reverend Father Richard who died last year, Reverend Father Cooke and Reverend Father Aubert for France, for the reports in France, are the confidants of the English; they often talk about them." Father Aubert had certainly picked up some English customs, for example, he regularly requested that *The Tablet* be sent to him (Prosper Boisramé to Mazenod, June 11, 1858)

Bishop de Mazenod was not always in agreement with Father Aubert's decisions in the foundation and administration of this province.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, he approved everything and recognized from the beginning that the latter was carrying out his task "with intelligence and dedication."<sup>87</sup>

In the short death notice written on Father Aubert, the day after his death, Father A. Rey devoted a long paragraph to the role that he had played in the foundation and expansion of the Anglo-Irish Province. He wrote: "Father Aubert worked a great deal in England. It's to him that the Congregation owes the first establishments that it has in that land where heresy is so strong. Through the disposition of Providence, Father Aubert was led there at the moment that the cooperation of Catholic priests could be most usefully employed. No one knows what this excellent religious had to endure in order to arrive at an establishment. He knew how to overcome the most unsurmountable obstacles that rose up before him. All kinds of deprivations could not weaken his courage. In order to better promote God's designs, he stayed in Ireland and accepted a chair of philosophy in one of the Catholic colleges. The wages he received from his teaching position facilitated the foundations that he had in mind."<sup>88</sup>

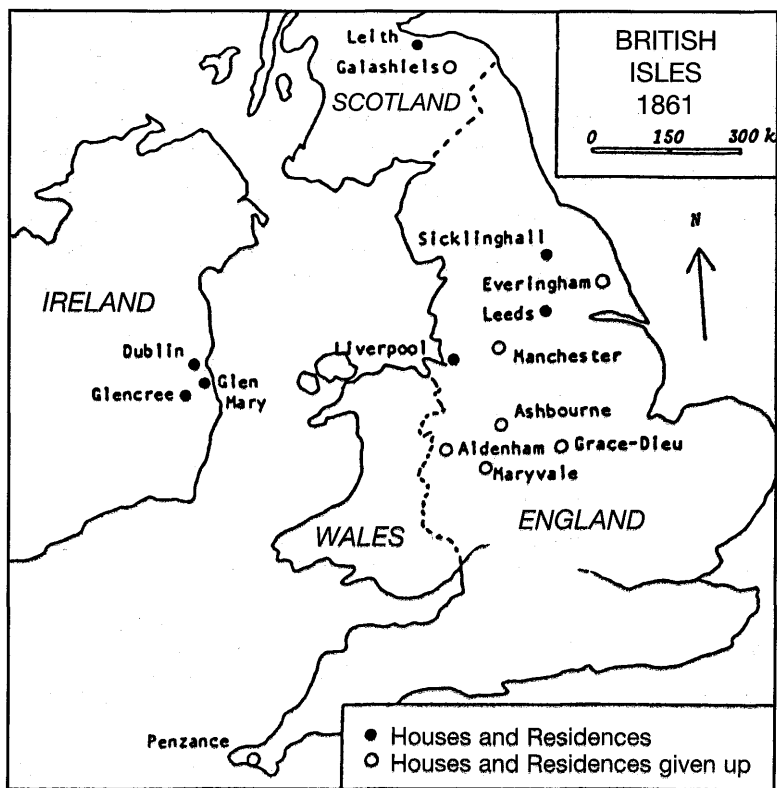
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<sup>86</sup> For example in the matter regarding the Brothers of Saint Patrick (*Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 5-6) or when Father Aubert was considering sending several men to Canada (*Oblate Writings* 4, p. 61).

<sup>87</sup> Mazenod to Guigues, February 18, 1843, *Oblate Writings* 10, p. 5. If we had to form a judgment on Father Aubert's virtues, we could have some doubts about his prudence. In the Cause of canonization of the abbé Noailles, founder of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, the Promoter of the faith has brought up some difficulties against this virtue because the abbé Noailles had to abandon three foundations out of the 223 he had made in 30 years. Father Aubert had to give up 8 out of 15 in 20 years. In his favor, we must remember that three departures were due to Father Daly's imprudence and the others can be explained by the desire to follow the ends of the Congregation better, that is, to give parish missions and work among the poor. Out of necessity, at the beginning, he had to accept offers of the Great Lords, especially to work in the Protestant areas. Later, when the Oblates became known, he accepted the offers of Bishops to work in cities among Catholics, most of them very poor.

<sup>88</sup> This affirmation has no basis in the historical sources that we possess. But, at that time, and when he wrote the Founder's biography at the end of the century, Father Rey had Father Aubert's letters that have disappeared.

In this way he was able to acquire a perfect knowledge of the English language and his observant nature easily noticed everything that constituted the special character of a young Englishman. Through his care several young people entered the Congregation and lent a hand to his efforts. They were crowned with success. Now the Oblates possess several houses in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the Lord has blessed beyond every hope the works of their zeal.”<sup>89</sup>



The Anglo-Irish Province (1842-1861)

<sup>89</sup> Notice in *la Gazette du Midi*, January 19, 1860, p. 2.



## IV

## SUPERIOR OF LE CALVAIRE AFTER 1845

When he was not in England, Father Aubert held down several jobs at Marseilles and intimately shared the Founder's responsibilities in governing the Congregation.

Le Calvaire, or our first house in Marseilles,<sup>1</sup> was practically the General House until the opening of Montolivet in 1854. Since it was situated only a few steps from the bishop's house and the major seminary where Bishop de Mazenod and Father Tempier lived, Fathers and Brothers who wanted to see the Superior General or his first assistant came there to stay overnight, in the same way as the missionaries did who were waiting departure for foreign countries.

The service of the church, several chaplaincies and services such as those in prisons, care of some associations and works as those among Italians as well as those with Germans after 1852, parish missions, etc., demanded the presence of several religious and a superior who was welcoming, zealous, and endowed with qualities expected of a leader. Father Aubert who had been superior there before leaving for England in 1842, once again occupied this position from 1845 to 1848 and, without being officially named, several months in 1852, from March to October of 1853, from December 1855 to the end of 1856, from October to December 1857, from April to December 1858 and during the second semester of 1859.<sup>2</sup>

Superiors rapidly succeeded one another without having time to know the personnel nor the activities of the house. It was a difficult community that only Father Aubert succeeded in governing, not without some stress.

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<sup>1</sup> The second house was the Major Seminary (1827-1863), the third, Notre Dame de la Garde (1850) and the fourth, the Montolivet scholasticate (1854-1864).

<sup>2</sup> Father Victor Gaben has gathered together many documents about Le Calvaire, cf. *Chronique de la maison du Calvaire*, 1821-1965, 3 typed volumes.

During his trip to England in 1842-1844, Father Martin succeeded in replacing him, but from the beginning of 1845 Father Aubert once again became superior of the house and Secretary General.<sup>3</sup> During his five journeys to England from 1848 to 1852, Fathers Martin (1849 and 1850), Bellon (1851) and Vincens (1852) were superior one after the other. But Father Vincens stayed in the house only several months each year as the one responsible for the "major course" of pastoral for the young Fathers. So Father Aubert undoubtedly acted as superior several months in 1852 and certainly from March to October 1853.

Father Dassy, a native of Marseilles, was installed as superior on November 1, 1853. Father Aubert who always lived at Le Calvaire when not travelling, was then named director of the "major course" which lasted from November to March every year.

When Father Dassy began his term as superior, he described the situation at Le Calvaire with its numerous activities. He noticed that three of the works were declining and that fewer people came to the church. This situation, according to him, arose from two opposing causes: the major developments taken over by the establishments of the Jesuits and Capuchins, and the scandalous measure taken to repopulate the old sections with "thousands of people of ill-repute ... Where our church sees them lined up to its very doors."<sup>4</sup>

Fearing to offend his predecessor, after having spoken of the decline of important works, Father Dassy praised him. "The new local superior," he wrote, "is pleased to give the most honorable testimony to his predecessor. Having several times been called to direct the work of Le Calvaire and the community which is the first house of our Institute in Marseilles, in all the time of his administration he continuously applied himself to carry out his duties with limitless dedication, with prudence and unchanging vigilance. If everything did not succeed according to his wishes, independently of the reasons we have mentioned above, we think it must be attributed to that multitude of

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<sup>3</sup> Mazenod to Courtes, January 4, 1845. *Oblate Writings* 10, p. 94.

<sup>4</sup> Codex Historicus of Le Calvaire house, 1853-1970. Archives of the southern Province at Lyons, n. 25. Father Dassy who loved to write continually started this codex in 1853 and filled dozens of pages.

occupations which weighed him down and would have required two men at least.”<sup>5</sup>

Father Dassy stayed in the house until 1859. He excelled in every ministry. He revived the works and attracted the faithful by giving more solemnity to many feasts and undertook various works in the church, but he remained superior less than two years. In fact, just several months after his appointment he begged the Founder to replace him. A man of the rule and exigent on himself, but also for others, he wanted to reinforce regularity too energetically, watching over and directing the works of every Father. These complained and opposed him, making the situation untenable.

Bishop de Mazenod knew that only Father Aubert succeeded well in that capacity. But they were going to open Montolivet and the latter was designated there as professor of moral theology; he went there on October 29, 1854.<sup>6</sup> He taught the course during that first school year, but he seldom lived there. His presence undoubtedly turned out to be necessary at Le Calvaire as a cushion between the superior and the community. He made the shuttle between Le Calvaire and Montolivet, the distance of an hour's walk. The Fathers in the community loved him. One of them, Father Saby, who was preaching Lenten sermons at Toulon was worried about his health. On March 3, 1855, he wrote to him: “I am happy to have the opportunity of your feast to give you news about myself. But, first of all, allow me to wish you, under your holy patron's protection, the accomplishment of all your desires in the work of your spiritual progress, double zeal in the midst of your many tasks, and furthermore, an ever-stronger health to help you courageously climb the Mount of Olives. Because there is reason to be concerned about seeing you, every day and several times a day, pacing such a long and painful road in wind and rain, always with sweat running down your forehead. I take the liberty in these lines to pass on to you a little reproach for your doing too much possibly and not taking enough care

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<sup>5</sup> Le Calvaire Codex, November 1853. Father Dassy spoke there of his predecessor, who was Father Vincens; but it is clear he wanted to designate Father Aubert.

<sup>6</sup> Historical Codex of Le Calvaire, October 1854; Mazenod to Vandenberghe, September 22, 1854, *Oblate Writings* 11, p. 244; Father Berthuel to Father Aubert, October 1854. AGR, Berthuel file.

of yourself in all that walking. Take care, you'll [pay] for it later and you know the need we have for all the elder members of the Congregation, but now more than ever. ..."<sup>7</sup>

Father Aubert spent the summer of 1855 in England. When he returned he preached the annual retreat to the community at Le Calvaire and on November 1, 1855 took over again the direction of the house while waiting for the naming of Father Dassy's successor.<sup>8</sup> This was Father Rouillet who only lived in the house during the first eight months of 1857. In mid September he received his obedience as director of Mister Allemand's Youth Work at Marseilles.<sup>9</sup>

Father Lancenay, named Superior at the beginning of 1858, likewise stayed in the house only three months. At the same time he was in charge of the direction of the Brothers of Perpetual Help who took care of sick people in their homes; he had to go and live with them due to grave dissensions that had arisen in the community. During his absence, as it is written in the register of council meetings on April 3, "the Reverend Father Provincial [Aubert] will act as Superior."

Father Lagier was named Superior in December, 1858 and was installed on January 15, 1859, but in August, Bishop de Mazenod sent him to Nancy as Superior and Master of Novices, replacing Father Guinet who was seriously sick. Father Aubert, replaced him for the nth time until his own death in January 1860.<sup>10</sup>

These frequent changes of Superior at Le Calvaire point to the mobility of the personnel. Out of a dozen Fathers and Brothers, at least half changed every year, while two or three remained longer, as Aubert or Dassy.<sup>11</sup> The Founder was forced to do this because of opening new houses every year in France or outside. This was more accentuated at Le Calvaire, a community where young Fathers were customarily sent or

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. V. Gaben, *Chronique*, vol. I, pp. 616-617.

<sup>8</sup> De Veronico to Aubert, March 10, 1856. AGR, De Veronico file.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Y. Beaudoin, *L'Affiliation aux Oblats de l'Institut de l'Oeuvre de la Jeunesse dite de M. Allemand, à Marseille (1857-1862)*, in *Etudes Oblates*, vol. 22, (1963), p. 115.

<sup>10</sup> Codex Historicus from Nancy, November 1, 1859. AGR, H a 23. Father Lagier's name does not appear in the Council minutes of the Midi Province after June 1859.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Essay on the personnel 1821-1862, in the *Chronique du Calvaire* cf. Father Gaben, Appendix.

other older ones under observation, not far from the authorities. That added to the Superior's workload since he had to initiate the newcomers to various works and assign everyone to preaching.

Even though we can determine more or less with precision the times during which Father Aubert was officially or unofficially Superior, we know less about his activity. Some details appear here and there in the minutes of the Council meetings and in the financial administration as well as in the *Codex historicus* of the house beginning in 1853. For example, the Register for financial matters gives evidence of major repair works and decoration of the church in 1853-1854. As direct ministry, Father Aubert directed the Association of N.-D. des Sept Douleurs until 1854,<sup>12</sup> and often preached. Actually, they preached a great deal at Le Calvaire. The Italians had brought statues of the patrons of the various regions from where they had come. Thus, feasts frequently came one after another, very often preceded by a novena or followed by an octave. The Superior had to look for preachers among the Fathers at Aix or Le Calvaire, including the young Fathers of the "major course" who used to give their first sermons there. Some of them missed their turn and the Superior had to improvise or, being provincial at the same time, impose this obligation on certain more generous Oblates.

Thus, for example, at the end of April 1856, he called at the last moment on Father Sardou, a professor at Montolivet. The latter had always shown himself to be available, up to then, but that time, he replied with a blunt, well-motivated, blunt refusal: "It's with a feeling of deep sadness and very lively regret that I have decided to reply to your letter of yesterday. After due reflection over your request and consultation with Reverend Father Superior [Tempier], who favoured a refusal, which I must honor, I beg you not to count on me for Sunday. Fully believe, Reverend Father, that it is totally impossible that, from today till three days from now, I could find myself ready to give you something suitable: today, monthly retreat; tomorrow, a sermon; Friday and Saturday, classes; where could I find the actual time to prepare myself? ... Besides, permit me to say that I love the Congregation too

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<sup>12</sup> Father Dassy replaced him, cf. *Codex Historicus*, January 1854. Father Aubert had started a register in 1849 entitled: "Congregation of Notre Dame des Sept Douleurs established in 1826 (Suzanne) at Le Calvaire and the Council minutes of this Congregation from 1849 to [1870]." Provincial Archives of the Southern Province at Lyons, n. 30.

much to thus pull the wool over the public eye as to its extreme poverty and this constant recourse to the most ridiculous expedients used to cover up its misery. And if I can speak on my own behalf, I would deeply regret being thus reduced to the role of a parrot-missionary ...

I am speaking openly with you, maybe a little too frankly; but that is one of my weaknesses, and you have learnt to know me well enough to be convinced that these lines in no way alter the respect, love, and obedience that I owe to such a good Father. May it please God that all the members of your house grant you the same respect, love and obedience so that you will certainly not be reduced to beg in this way for a sermon from a professor and so compromise the future men of the Congregation by throwing them into work beyond their strength without preparation. You would especially not be reduced to paying the price yourself as you so often do and as you are doing again in these circumstances; that is mainly what upsets me, be sure. ..."<sup>13</sup>

According to the end of this letter the Superior often had to do the work himself. However, we don't know details about it except that he gave a long "historical and pious" talk on the history of Le Calvaire at the time of the solemn installation of the Way of the Cross by Bishop de Mazenod on April 9, 1854.<sup>14</sup>

Among ceremonies, we must mention the departure of missionaries which took place every year at Le Calvaire.<sup>15</sup>

The few documents on hand about the apostolic activity of Father Aubert at Le Calvaire do not allow us to give a more detailed exposition. Nevertheless we can guess that it was not a very restful assignment, all the more so since the Superior's time was divided also between his functions as Provincial, Canonical Visitor, Secretary General and Assistant to the Superior General.

We have seen how Father Dassy praised him, and the Founder admired him likewise. He wrote to Father Semeria in 1848: "The faithful and incomparable Fr. Aubert who copes with everything with admirable efficiency and presence of mind."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> AGR, Sardou file.

<sup>14</sup> Codex Historicus of Le Calvaire, April 9, 1854.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* April 30, 1854, and Mazenod to Aubert, March 4, 1857, *Oblate Writings* 12, p. 43.

<sup>16</sup> Mazenod to Semeria, May 9, 1848, *Oblate Writings* 4, p. 10.



House of Le Calvaire in Marseille, built by the Oblates from 1823 to 1826. Design by Brother Kingsley Cooray, O.M.I., based on a photograph made in 1903 on the occasion of our expulsion.





## V

## VICE-PROVINCIAL (1853) AND PROVINCIAL OF THE PROVINCE OF MIDI (1854-1860)

Pope Pius IX, by the Brief of March 28, 1851, approved the changes and additions made to the Rule at the 1850 General Chapter. The General Council set up four provinces and four vicariates at the meetings of April 23 and 24.

The Midi Province, also called the first French Province, included the houses of Marseilles (Le Calvaire, Major Seminary and Notre Dame de la Garde), Aix, Corsica (Major Seminary at Ajaccio and house at Vico), Notre Dame de Lumières and Notre Dame de Bon-Secours. "The Superior General himself will govern it for the time-being" say the minutes of the Council meeting.

We have seen that Father Casimir Aubert was, at that time, named Provincial of the second French Province, and then, on July 2 following that, Provincial of the Oblates in England since the Bishops were asking for his return. He stayed there only several months.

On the occasion of promulgating the second edition of the Rule in 1853, Bishop de Mazenod sent a circular letter, dated August 2, to the Congregation and named a Council for each Province. He kept for himself the administration of the Midi Province, composed of nine houses at that time, but named Father Aubert Vice-Provincial.<sup>1</sup> On September 16, Father Magnan, Superior of the Major Seminary in Ajaccio wrote to him: "I am profiting from Father Roller to send you my sincere congratulations on the high dignity bestowed on you among us. May you carry out, during the course of your Vice-Provincialate, all the good that I know you desire; in that way you will, in some way, make up for our

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix to the Circular of August 2, 1853. Postulation Archives at Rome, DM IX 5.

foolishness and we will settle down in peace under your young and tranquil pastoral leadership.”<sup>2</sup>

We are quite familiar with the activity of the Vice-Provincial and, later, of the Provincial from his circular letters,<sup>3</sup> his Acts of Visitation<sup>4</sup> and most of all through some hundred letters received by Oblates of the Province, especially Superiors of the various houses.

Before his trip to Rome at the end of 1854, to attend the Definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Bishop de Mazond reworked his last will<sup>5</sup> and gave up the administration of the first Province by naming Father Aubert Provincial.<sup>6</sup> The latter was reappointed to this task after the General Chapter of 1856.<sup>7</sup>

Being a man of order and discipline, the Provincial wrote already at the end of October, 1854, to all the local Superiors a circular letter informing them that the Provincial Council would meet at Marseilles on Tuesdays of the second week of each month. He reminded them that, according to the Rule, they also had to meet with their Council members every month and send the Provincial the minutes of local Council meetings and the financial state of the house.<sup>8</sup> He made frequent Canonical Visitations the reports of which we have on hand. We have the Acts of Visitation for the houses of Aix, Montolivet, Notre Dame de la Garde, Notre Dame de Bon Secours and Notre Dame de Lumières, two for Le Calvaire house, four for the Major Seminary at Ajaccio and the apostolic school at Vico.<sup>9</sup>

His duties caused him a great deal of concern. One of the common problems in every house was that the Superiors kept asking for help in men and money just at the time that the Congregation was going through a financial crisis after building Montolivet, and the Founder

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<sup>2</sup> AGR, Magnan file.

<sup>3</sup> Most of them were written to announce the death of Fathers and Brothers.

<sup>4</sup> Refer to the list, *infra*, p. 131.

<sup>5</sup> Mazenod to Bellon, October 16, 1854. *Oblate Writings* 11, p. 248.

<sup>6</sup> General Council of September 12, 1854.

<sup>7</sup> General Council of August 17, 1856.

<sup>8</sup> He himself continued to keep in order the Register of Provincial Council meetings that he had started in 1853. Midi Provincial Archives at Lyons.

<sup>9</sup> See the list, *infra*, p. 131.

usually preferred to send young Fathers to foreign missions. The Provincial succeeded to reply calmly and diplomatically to the most urgent needs or made people understand that they had to wait patiently.

Only Father Telmon who was a pain to all his Superiors criticized him openly. Having returned tired and bad-tempered from Canada and named Superior of Notre Dame de Lumières when he wanted to live outside an Oblate community, he intended to change everything quickly and form a dynamic community but adapted ungraciously to the deferring replies of the Provincial as he also had to those of Father Tempier. For example, he wrote to the Founder in 1855: "Father Aubert seemed a little upset to what I complained to you about his delays and so frequent changing of plans. I thought I had been rather moderate. A categorical review of his promises and announcements would have been more stinging and disagreeable. He is not aware of all the inconveniences of doing things like that. So many disturbances, bad feelings, uncertain steps, commands and counter-commands, so much money lost in works that no longer have any purpose, lack of consideration for a local Superior who had to advance, back up, hesitate and end up giving the impression of being a fool in his own house because he took the letters of his major Superiors seriously. I doubt very much whether Father Aubert would agree with that position."<sup>10</sup>

To take into consideration the decisions of the General Administration and departures for the missions, the Provincial often had to make changes in a house's personnel. This couldn't happen without disturbances and discontent. In a letter to his brother Victor on October 7, 1856, Father Charles Baret gave a list of recent obediences at Notre Dame de l'Osier and added: "My thinking becomes clouded in all these moves ... We are impatiently waiting two replacements for Fathers Burfin and Sigaud. Father Aubert recently wrote a letter<sup>11</sup> which caused a real storm. I must admit it was a bit strong. Let's feel sorry for the Superiors, General, Local, and *tutti quanti*, and never stop repeating our beautiful motto: *moriamur in simplicitate nostra*."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Telmon to Mazenod, July 3, 1855. AGR, Telmon file.

<sup>11</sup> Notre Dame de l'Osier was under the General Administration because of the novitiate. So, Father Aubert had simply communicated the obediences as Secretary-General.

<sup>12</sup> AGR, Charles Baret file.

The Provincial had to ask many other sacrifices from his men. Even though he knew how to do so delicately, he sometimes drew negative reactions on himself. We have seen how Father Sardou, in 1856, refused to go and preach at Le Calvaire. In 1859, Father Rambert, a professor at the Major Seminary in Marseilles, gave him a triple refusal at one time. He even bragged about it in a letter to Father Fabre: "Tuesday, Reverend Father Provincial told me that he would be waiting for me at Le Calvaire between one and two o'clock. He warned me to be shaved, cleaned-up in my Sunday best. Somewhat surprised by this, I hastened to respond to my Major Superior's invitation. Father Aubert greeted me with his customary affability and, after the usual civilities and a certain amount of circumlocutions, he informed me that he had had me come to take part in a ceremony of distributing prizes," next to preach on the catechism of perseverance at the Saint Cannat parish and, during the year, to help Father Bernard at Notre Dame de la Garde. Rambert opposed him with a definite refusal on all points and added: "I brought on myself some uncomplimentary remarks."<sup>13</sup>

On other occasions, the Provincial put his foot down. Father Rey, for example, informed Father Fabre on August 2, 1859 that "Father Provincial was to have left yesterday for La Blachère. He formally obligated me to accept the September retreat."<sup>14</sup> The poor Marseilles seminary professors! Too near to the authorities of the Congregation, they could not hope for much rest during summer holidays. After Fathers Rambert and Rey, Father Roux, professor of Church History, saw himself entrusted by the Provincial with the retreat to the Sisters of Saint Charles, but he succeeded in explaining and making it understood that he was not able. Soon after that, Father Tempier accosted him and, being less understanding than Father Aubert, sent him to preach a retreat at Manosque.<sup>15</sup>

The Provincial closely followed particular problems in each house. If he made four Canonical Visits to Corsica, it was because there, more than in other places, difficulties came up, especially at Vico. Father

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<sup>13</sup> Rambert to Fabre, August 27, 1859. AGR, Rambert file.

<sup>14</sup> AGR, A. Rey file.

<sup>15</sup> Laurent Roux to Joseph Fabre, August 19, 1859. AGR, Roux, L. file.

Magnan, Seminary Superior at Ajaccio from 1846 to 1856, at first got on very well with the Bishops but, in 1855, he had a falling-out with them. He accused Bishop Sarrebayrouse, the Auxiliary, of interfering in the entire direction of the seminary, and Bishop Casanelli d'Istria of not keeping to the written agreements relative to temporal administration.<sup>16</sup> Bishop de Mazenod who was rather displeased with the Bishop of Ajaccio, never satisfied with the Seminary Directors whom he found too young, willingly passed on to Father Aubert the task of settling this matter during his visit in April 1856. At that time, the latter replaced Father Magnan with Father Santoni, a Corsican Oblate, who had completed his term as Provincial of Canada.<sup>17</sup>

From 1855 on, the house at Vico became a Church-school.<sup>18</sup> Even there, the Bishop did not always keep his promises of supporting the institute financially; besides that, he lived there several months every year. His presence attracted many visitors, disturbed the regular life of the community and put a heavy burden on the bursar's finances. Father Aubert went there every year from 1856 to 1859 and, with great openness, made known the Fathers' grievances and succeeded in getting along quite well with Bishop Casanelli d'Istria.<sup>19</sup>

Father Telmon replaced Father Bise at Notre Dame de Lumières in 1854. After that he never stopped accusing his predecessors of leaving debts behind, Father Tempier of pillaging the house to furnish Montolivet and the Provincial of not sending necessary personnel for the work or money needed for the repair work on the property. He especially had recourse to Fathers Aubert and Tempier to conclude the court cases which had dragged on a long time with the commune of Goult and

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<sup>16</sup> Magnan to Mazenod, December 30, 1855, April 2, 1856. We have on hand 22 letters from Father Magnan to Father Aubert from 1849 to 1856. Aubert to Casanelli d'Istria, August 24, 1856. AGR.

<sup>17</sup> Aubert to Bishop Casanelli d'Istria, August 24, 1856. AGR. On April 30, 1857, the Founder asked Father Aubert to demand financial reports from Father Santoni, who was accustomed to independence.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. E. Lamirande, *Les oeuvres d'enseignement dans la Congrégation du vivant du Fondateur, Etudes Oblates*, vol. 25 (1966), pp. 3-34.

<sup>19</sup> Acts of Visitation from 1856 to 1859; Casanelli to Aubert, July 16 and 21, 1857; De Veronico to Aubert, 17 letters from 1852 to 1859; Luigi to Aubert, 3 letters from 1854 to 1856; Balaïn to Aubert, 9 letters from 1858 to 1859.

Mister Vaison, a quarrelsome, rapacious neighbour.<sup>20</sup> In 1859, the Provincial succeeded in reopening the Juniorate at Lumières under Father Pascal Ricard's care.<sup>21</sup>

In 1846, Bishop Guibert of Viviers offered the shrine of Notre Dame de Bon Secours in the Ardèche region to the Oblates. Father Martin was house Superior there from 1850 to 1857, followed by Father Honorat on his return from Canada. Each of them wrote some thirty letters to the Provincial, keeping him up to date regarding personnel, apostolic works and material needs. Being very attached to the Congregation and the Founder, they understood that the Provincial could not respond to all their needs and knew how to wait patiently.<sup>22</sup>

We know less of the Provincial's relations with the communities of Aix, the Major Seminary, Notre Dame de la Garde and Montolivet. Due to their proximity, he was able to visit them frequently which left no written traces.

Father Aubert didn't open any houses during his Provincialate; the Seminary at Fréjus was accepted by Bishop de Mazenod in 1851 and the house of Montolivet, opened in 1854, was directly under the General Administration. Father Aubert made a Canonical Visit there in July 1856. He could only congratulate himself that the scholastics' community was functioning well under the spiritual direction of Father Mouchette. Father Tempier's direction, as Superior, seemed to him to be less proficient, and that's why he didn't leave an Act of Visitation but a personal letter to the Superior of the house in which he noted a long list of deficiencies to be corrected.<sup>23</sup> It's admirable to see how frankly he spoke to Father Tempier when we see the sense of duty which animated the Provincial and the humility and obedience he was sure of meeting in his venerable elder brother.

The Fathers who requested to leave the Congregation or who had to be expelled did not cause great worry to the Midi Provincial. Even if

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<sup>20</sup> Telmon to Mazenod, July 3 and 28, 1855, to Fabre, January 5 and 10, 1855, about fifteen letters to Aubert and thirty to Tempier from 1854 to 1857.

<sup>21</sup> *Missions OMI* 1863, p. 494. This juniorate was closed during the 1848 Revolution.

<sup>22</sup> AGR, Martin and Honorat files.

<sup>23</sup> See *infra*, p. 268.

there were 72 dispensations from vows in the Congregation between 1850 and 1861, fewer than ten were from the members of the first Province. We have correspondance on hand regarding this subject with Fathers Aubry, Pianelli, Michelier, Sigaud, H.J. Courbet, and Gondrand. Several of these left only after Father Aubert and Bishop de Mazenod had died, such as Fathers Gondrand and Dassy. These two Fathers loved Father Aubert very much and showed him their gratitude, the first for the Provincial's understanding and patience in his regard,<sup>24</sup> the second for the encouragement received from him at the time of the foundation of the Institute for Young Blind People.<sup>25</sup>

We read these few lines in the death notice written by Father Rey regarding Father Aubert's time as Provincial: "He was the lifeblood of the innumerable works carried on by the Oblates during these recent years in the dioceses of Aix and Marseilles. He never once refused to be of service."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> There are about ten letters from Father Gondrand to Father Aubert from 1853 to 1860. AGR.

<sup>25</sup> Aubert to Dassy, July 20, 1857; Dassy to Mazenod, February 28, 1858. "[The Work of the Young Blind People] owes everything to Bishop de Mazenod ..., and thanks also to my best friend at that time, Reverend Father Aubert whose kindness was superabundant." cf. M. Devès, *Le P. Dassy*, Paris, 1938, p. 195.

<sup>26</sup> *La Gazette du Midi*, January 19, 1860, p. 2.



Father Pierre Aubert, O.M.I. (1814-1890)



## VI

GENERAL SECRETARY, PROCURATOR  
FOR THE MISSIONS, ASSISTANT*General Secretary (1837-1860)*

We have already seen that Father Aubert, soon after his ordination in 1833, was, on occasion, secretary to Bishop de Mazenod. In 1837, the latter had him named by the General Chapter adjunct Assistant General, "to carry out the functions of secretary to the Superior General that Father Guibert, Secretary General of the Institute, was not able to exercise due to his distance."<sup>1</sup>

Bishop de Mazenod still often complained after that about the absence of a secretary whom he needed "to expedite current affairs."<sup>2</sup> These complaints happened at the time of Father Aubert's trips to England.

The Chapters of 1843 and 1850 in turn named Fathers Courtès and Charles Bellon as Third and Fourth Assistant and Secretary General. But these Fathers carried out their function only provisionally during Father Aubert's absences.<sup>3</sup>

In a letter of January 4, 1845 to Father Courtès, Bishop de Mazenod announced that he had named Father Aubert as superior of Le Calvaire and his "private secretary for business of the Congregation. He has already started on his new job, and his first work was to re-edit the

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter of 1837, meeting of August 8. AGR. Father Guibert was superior of the Major Seminary of Ajaccio at that time.

<sup>2</sup> Mazenod to Vincens, September 7, 1842, to Aubert, September 22, 1842 and November 24, 1849, to Dassy on January 26, 1850, to Tempier on July 26 and 28, 1853, etc.

<sup>3</sup> We have one register of letters written by Father Bellon in 1850-1852. APR, DM X 1.

minutes of our Council meeting, of which up to now not a trace can be found.”<sup>4</sup> Actually, we have on hand two volumes of minutes of the General Council, written almost entirely by Father Casimir Aubert, from December 16, 1844 up to May 28, 1859. During his trips to England, sometimes Father Bellon, often absent himself, or Father Lagier, Mille or Fabre drew up this report.<sup>5</sup> From 1852 to 1859 Father Aubert wrote everything. During that time, only his name regularly appeared after each report, whereas before that the Superior General and the Assistants always signed. No doubt the secretary had to take notes during the meeting and write his text later, in rare free moments; that explains why the register stopped in May 1859, eight months before Father Aubert’s death.

As Secretary General, Father Aubert likewise prepared the *Notice historique et statistique sur la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de M.I.* and the *Compte rendu* in 1853-1854, 1854-1855, and 1857-1858,<sup>6</sup> as well as the *Etat général du personnel de la Congregation ...* (personnel and necrology) in 1854.<sup>7</sup> In 1854 and 1855, these notices were signed by the Superior General and Father Aubert “fulfilling the duties of Secretary General.” In 1858, he signed: “Assistant and Secretary General.”<sup>8</sup> In fact, he had been named to that by the Chapter of 1856.

The Secretary General helped Bishop de Mazenod in preparing official acts: obediences,<sup>9</sup> expulsions or announcement of dispensation

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<sup>4</sup> *Oblate Writings* 10, p. 94. we understand by this text that private secretary and general secretary meant the same thing for the Founder.

<sup>5</sup> AGR. Register of General Council meetings. Together with the Founder and other benevolent secretaries, Father Aubert kept up three other registers: Register of the most important letters from 1855 to 1863, APR, DM X 2; Register of letters on relations with foreign missions, APR, DM X 3; Diary of general correspondance 1857-1859, AGR, H b 48.

<sup>6</sup> It seems that Father Rey helped him, at least in 1855, and took on the task of having the text printed, cf. Rey to Fabre, August 19, 1855. Father Aubert was assigned to make a similar notice in 1859, cf. Mazenod to Aubert, March 14, 1859. *Oblate Writings* 12, p. 145.

<sup>7</sup> APR, DM IX 8.

<sup>8</sup> Officially, Father Guibert was secretary general from 1837 to 1843, Father Courtès from 1843 to 1850 and Father Bellon from 1850 to 1856.

<sup>9</sup> Thus for example, Father Aubert signed Father Ricard’s obedience for Oregon on January 22, 1847 (*Oblate Writings* 1, pp. 154-156), of Father Dassy for Nancy in 1847 (*Oblate Writings* 10, p. 179), etc.

from vows,<sup>10</sup> circular letters,<sup>11</sup> and diplomas for the communication of prayers or merits,<sup>12</sup> etc. The Oblates in France often wrote to him, in various need, since they knew that he was in close contact with the Superior General and often wrote in his name.<sup>13</sup> For example, Father Martin, in a letter of September 4, 1853, thanked the Founder for his recent circular letter on the new edition of the Rule and added: "I will give no details here touching on our house. Reverend Father Aubert, whom you have assigned to correspond with us, will certainly let you know exactly all that concerns our personnel."<sup>14</sup>

Sometimes Bishop de Mazenod even seemed to entrust his secretary with writing embarrassing letters. For example, in 1848, due to lack of money after the Revolution, the General Council decided to close the novitiate at Nancy, opened less than a year before. Father Dassy, the Superior, never resigned himself to that decision which he attributed to Father Tempier, the Bursar General. On June 19, he wrote to Bishop de Mazenod: "In spite of all the reasons he was able to give me, Father Aubert did not succeed in convincing me from a financial viewpoint and still less from the aspect of peace;" he ended off by saying that he was nevertheless going to submit.<sup>15</sup>

In 1854, the Superior General, through the mediation of Father Aubert, obliged Father Telmon to return to living in an Oblate community.<sup>16</sup> In 1858, Father Martin who had been named Superior of Notre Dame de Talence at Bordeaux was hoping to increase the personnel; but he understood the reasons Father Aubert gave him for refusing to

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<sup>10</sup> The dispensations from vows were very numerous, especially from 1850 to 1856. Father Joseph Pielorz made a list of them on the occasion of General Chapters, cf. *Les Chapitres généraux aux temps du Fondateur*, 1968, 2 vol.

<sup>11</sup> The main circular letters of Bishop de Mazenod are published in *Oblate Writings* 12, pp. 203-239.

<sup>12</sup> For example, to the Hospital Sisters of Saint Joseph, at Hôtel-Dieu in Montreal, cf. *Oblate Writings* 1, pp. 195-196.

<sup>13</sup> He wrote principally to Fathers Charles Baret, Berthuel, Burfin, Chavard, Dassy, Martin and Vincens.

<sup>14</sup> AGR, Martin, J.A. file.

<sup>15</sup> Dassy to Mazenod, June 7 and 19, 1848.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Mazenod to Vincens, September 21, 1854, in *Oblate Writings* 11, p. 242.

respond to this request during the first year and agreed to reduce the activities of the house.<sup>17</sup>

On August 2, 1853, Bishop de Mazenod sent out a circular letter on the occasion of the second edition of the Rule. In the paragraph dealing with the provinces, he stated clearly that, in the future, Fathers and Brothers would correspond and discuss current issues with the Provincials. But the Founder did not easily change his habit of corresponding directly with everyone and even gave orders without consulting the provincials.<sup>18</sup>

Did the Secretary General lend himself too generously to the Founder's liberty or did he himself take the initiative to reproach Father Vincens, Provincial of North France, for not keeping the General informed enough of his administration? On November 3, 1853, Father Vincens wrote him this letter of exoneration and explanation which pleased the Founder very much. He wrote: "Dear Father, it would be very nice if from now on, in the administration of the provinces, that you send back to the Provincial those matters that are in his domain. However, this does not exclude in any way the activity of our beloved Father Superior General and Founder. The Provincial is only his mouthpiece and must administer according to his intentions. Nevertheless, to keep the proper hierarchical order, it is important that everything be addressed to the Provincial who is charged with circulating it. It is a bit of work for the Provincial who will be obliged to address it to each house so that the secretary of the Superior General would only have to send it to the Provincial. But I do not like it that you insist that I do not act in important matters without consulting our beloved Father. I would almost conclude that you know neither my mind nor heart. In a word: I belong to the Congregation from the depths of my being; I would give my last breath for it, but I don't think someone could belong to the Congregation without being devoted heart and soul to its Founder. I gladly say this to you because the frankness with which I have sometimes expressed my disagreement in Council and the allowances that I make in regard to weak members so as not to extinguish the smoking brand might lead someone to think or feel otherwise. I love our Superior

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<sup>17</sup> Martin to Mazenod, September 19, 1958. AGR, Martin, J.A. file.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Oblate Writings* 11, pp. XXIV-XXV

General from the bottom of my heart, like a Father; I believe him and in his decisions more than in those of anyone else. It is not just a duty for me to consult him, but a need.”<sup>19</sup>

*Procurator and Secretary for the missions (1846-1860)*

In the report of the General Council Meeting of June 6, 1846, concerning Father Faraud’s obedience for the missions of the Canadian Northwest, it says: “Reverend Father Aubert, Procurator of the Congregation’s foreign missions will take care of [his] departure.”<sup>20</sup> Bishop de Mazenod, writing to the Propagation of the Faith on May 30, 1847, added: “Reverend Father Aubert, founder of our houses in England and procurator for the three foundations that the Congregation possesses in different parts of North America ...”<sup>21</sup> That also explains why the Founder considered Father Aubert “especially in charge of correspondence with England”<sup>22</sup> or in another place: correspondent with missionaries “for everything related to business matters.”<sup>23</sup>

Father Aubert, as General Secretary and Secretary for the missions, wrote many letters to Oblates in France and especially overseas; a certain number of them have been preserved; we are publishing 56 here; 5 sent to England,<sup>24</sup> 9 to Canada,<sup>25</sup> 12 to Oregon,<sup>26</sup> 4 to Texas,<sup>27</sup> one to Sri Lanka,<sup>28</sup> 5 to the Second French Province<sup>29</sup> and 19 to the First.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Vincens to Aubert, November 3, 1853. AGR, Vincens file.

<sup>20</sup> Report of the General Council Meetings of June 6, 1846 and May 30, 1847.

<sup>21</sup> *Oblate Writings* 5, p. 206.

<sup>22</sup> Mazenod to Bellon, November 11, 1852. *Oblate Writings* 3, p. 89.

<sup>23</sup> Mazenod to Allard, June 11, 1855 (*Oblate Writings* 4, p. 125) and to Guigues, October 16, 1857, *Oblate Writings* 2, p. 159.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Infra*, letters nos. 29, 31, 42, 54 and 56.

<sup>25</sup> *Infra*, letters nos. 12, 14, 20, 27, 32, 33, 34, 35 and 36.

<sup>26</sup> *Infra*, letters nos. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 38, 47, 48, 50, 52 and 53.

<sup>27</sup> *Infra*, letters nos. 13, 16, 19 and 37.

<sup>28</sup> *Infra*, letter no. 6.

<sup>29</sup> *Infra*, letters nos. 17, 21, 44, 46 and 55.

<sup>30</sup> *Infra*, letters nos. 2, 10, 11, 15, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30, 39, 40, 41, 43, 45, 49 and 51.

Bishop de Mazenod wrote to encourage the missionaries in their apostolic work and to invite them to observe the Rule, even if circumstances and surroundings hardly lent themselves to it; he left it to Father Tempier and above all to Father Aubert to care for treating of temporal matters. He refers to him dozens of times in his letters saying that Father Aubert has written or will write about this subject.<sup>31</sup>

Father Aubert, as Procurator of Missions, seemed to be little involved in buying goods requested by missionaries; Father Tempier, and after 1854, Father Fabre, the General Treasurers, did this willingly, but it was he who announced obediences and changes to house personnel,<sup>32</sup> organized departures for missionaries, set out their itinerary in great detail,<sup>33</sup> sent the requested merchandise,<sup>34</sup> and explained to new superiors the procedure for obtaining subsidies from the Propagation of the Faith.<sup>35</sup>

Father Aubert spent many hours of work in this duty. Problems from the Oblate missions were submitted to the General Council which took the decisions. The secretary had to clearly formulate and diplomatically announce whatever was proposed or imposed. Thus, it was he who dealt with the misunderstanding between Father Ricard and the Blanchet brothers, Bishops of Oregon City and Walla Walla,<sup>36</sup> the debts at Buffalo,<sup>37</sup> the problems with personnel at the Galveston college,<sup>38</sup> the refusal to accept the Major Seminary at Philadelphia,<sup>39</sup> the plan to found

<sup>31</sup> *Oblate Writings* 2, pp. 90, 135, 155, 164; 3, pp. 145, 147; 4, pp. 20-21, 91, 207.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. for example, *Infra*, Father Aubert's letters, nos. 5 and 19; Bérengier to Aubert, November 23, 1856; Crousel to Mazenod, November 20, 1859; D'Herbomez to Mazenod, December 18, 1859; Gaudet to Aubert, October 10 and 21, 1856.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Infra*, Father Aubert's letters, nos. 13, 14, 48, 50, 52, 53; Durieu to Mazenod, November 10, 1854 and Tabaret to Aubert, October 16, 1858.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Allard to Fabre, June 22, 1856 and April 16, 1857; Bermond to Faraut, May 27, 1851; Ricard to Mazenod, November 21, 1856; Telmon to Mazenod, August 10, 1847, etc.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Allard to Fabre, June 22, 1856; Aubert to Bermond, February 8, 1858, Mazenod to Allard, October 28, 1859, to Semeria, January 25, 1848, etc.

<sup>36</sup> *Infra*, Father Aubert's letters, nos. 5, 7, 8, and Ricard to Mazenod, October 20, 1854.

<sup>37</sup> *Infra*, letters nos. 12, 32, 36.

<sup>38</sup> *Infra*, letters nos. 16, 19, 20.

<sup>39</sup> *Infra*, letters nos. 32, 33, 35, 36, 37.

a house in Mexico,<sup>40</sup> the abandonment of missions among the Yakimas and Cayous in Oregon,<sup>41</sup> the appointment and unexpected return of Father Bermond, Canonical Visitor in Oregon,<sup>42</sup> etc.

Father Aubert wrote dispassionately in all his letters, spoke firmly when necessary, but always remained courteous and fraternal; he always gave some news of the Congregation.<sup>43</sup> The missionaries appreciated his dedication. We have some letters on hand from several of them who spoke about their trips and apostolate.<sup>44</sup> Some complaints arose here and there. Father Telmon, which was normal for him, informed Bishop de Mazenod on August 10, 1847, that he had received a "very poor lithograph" of the Bytown church and added: "I certainly regret that Father Aubert has still got himself involved in that affair." Father Pierre Aubert's reflection is more surprising. He wrote from Saint Boniface to Father Ricard in Oregon on July 25, 1848: "The Superior General has not written to me for 18 months, neither has my brother. Really, they are incomparably negligent at Marseilles."

Oblate missions owe a great deal to Father Aubert. They could not exist and survive without money. Bishop de Mazenod, being a realistic man, wrote more than a 100 letters to the Society of the Propagation of the Faith to request subsidies. He obtained substantial amounts which increased every year, going from 12,500 francs in 1843 to 190,000 in 1859.<sup>45</sup> But Father Aubert prepared yearly reports, very well documented on the needs of every Oblate mission.<sup>46</sup> The exactness and clarity of these reports merited praise from the Society's administrators.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Infra*, letters no. 37 and Mazenod to Gaudet, April 20, 1858.

<sup>41</sup> *Infra*, letter no. 38.

<sup>42</sup> *Infra*, letters nos. 27, 34; Mazenod to Bermond, September 9, 1857 and February 8, 1858.

<sup>43</sup> *Infra*, Father Aubert's letters, nos. 4, 7; Bermond to Faraut, November 6, 1848; Mazenod to Allard, May 30, 1857, etc.

<sup>44</sup> Pierre Aubert to Casimir, August 26, 1845 and June 20, 1856; Durieu to Mazenod, October 3, 1854; Gubbins to Mazenod, August 20, 1855; Honorat to Aubert, December 11, 1842 and April 13, 1843; Salasse to Aubert, December 2, 1857; Tortel to Aubert, s.d., etc.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Oblate Writings* 5, pp. XXXI-XXXVI.

<sup>46</sup> Reports from 1855 to 1859 were copied into the Register of letters, 1855-1861. APR, DM X. They were always very long, so we don't publish them, but they are precious for Oblate history. They allow us to become acquainted with the names of missionaries sent every year and the work of construction of churches, schools, houses, etc.

<sup>47</sup> *Oblate Writings* 5, p. 301.

*Assistant General (1846-1850, 1856-1860)*

As we have seen, the Capitulants at the 1837 Chapter named Father Aubert as Father Guibert's replacement. The 1843 Chapter said nothing further about it and named Father Courtès Third Assistant and Secretary General. As Superior of the house at Aix, Father Courtès didn't like to be away and seldom came to attend Council meetings. Thus, Father Aubert actually continued his replacement work. At the meeting of March 11, 1846, the Council named him Fourth Assistant in the place of Father Moreau who had died on the preceding February 2. From 1852 to 1856, he attended all the Council meetings as Father Bellon's replacement, who had been Fourth Assistant and Secretary General since the Chapter of 1850.

In 1856, he was elected Fourth Assistant and Secretary General,<sup>48</sup> functions he performed until his death. Practically speaking, he had thus been Assistant and Secretary for almost all his life. Likewise, he had taken part in the Chapter of 1837 as Superior of the Penzance house, in 1850 as Assistant General, and in 1856 as Provincial of the Midi Province.<sup>49</sup>

The role of Assistant added nothing to his workload and cares since, as Secretary and confidant of the Superior General, he had already daily worked several hours with him and shared his labor and responsibilities.

In the brief death notice that Father Rey dedicated to him, we read this: "Father Aubert was not in any way beneath the trust that was shown him. With one glance he took in both the overview and the details of the administration which took on new developments every year. The missions established in England, in Canada, on the Red River, in Oregon, on the island of Ceylon, on the Natal coast, received the Superior General's orders and direction through his mediation. All that concerned their material well-being rested on his shoulders. He looked after their needs in as much as the oft-times too-limited resources allowed. People admired the results he achieved in the management of business affairs without losing anything of the serenity of his character or the calmness of his spirit."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Session of the morning of August 8.

<sup>49</sup> See: reports of Chapters, the first session of each one.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *La Gazette du Midi*, January 19, 1860, p. 2.



## VII

CONFIDANT, COLLABORATOR, AND BELOVED  
SON OF THE FOUNDER

At the head of all Father Aubert's merits we must place that of being the appreciated confidant, the efficacious collaborator, and the beloved son of Bishop de Mazenod.

It can be stated that the Founder loved Father Aubert with all the affection he had for Father Suzanne at the Congregation's beginning and the great esteem that he always showed for Father Tempier. He found that, like himself, this Father grasped matters quickly and carried out well all that was confided to him. He loved him especially for his good manners, his affectionate and grateful heart, his open spirit, his exemplary religious life and love for the Congregation.

The Founder expressed himself on this matter dozens of times in his diary and letters which permits us to paint a portrait of Father Aubert's human and spiritual personality. In March 1833, he informed Father Guibert of the approaching ordination of Casimir Aubert saying: "What an outstanding fellow he is! Intelligence, character, virtue, heart: he has them all to perfection. You can congratulate yourself on winning such a prize and the family will be eternally grateful."<sup>1</sup>

*Appreciated Confidant*

It was when he was Novice Master at the beginning of his ministry that Bishop de Mazenod learnt to know Father Aubert well and to love him. At that time he asked him for secretarial work on occasion and then, after 1837, to be the Secretary General of the Congregation. As such, the Novice Master, who spent most of his life after that at Le Calvaire, very near the Archbishop's house, frequently visited the

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<sup>1</sup> Mazenod to Guibert, March 25, 1833. *Oblate Writings* 8, pp. 82-83.

Superior General to receive his directives, write his letters or simply keep him company. In November 1838, when Father Albini's grave illness deeply affected the Founder, he wrote these few words to Father Aubert: "Here I am grieving for four days and you are not unaware of it. What am I to think of seeing you so little eager to come and console me, were it only by your presence which has always been so pleasant for me. Judge for yourself."<sup>2</sup>

In spite of his numerous activities, after that Father Aubert avoided spacing his visits too far apart. But he had often to be away, at which times the Superior General used to complain of being "more alone than ever," and could affirm, as in 1851: "He used to pay me a visit at least every day."<sup>3</sup>

After returning from England in 1851, the Secretary General took up his visits again.<sup>4</sup> The Founder even found occasions to invite him to come to see him: on December 2, 1852, for example, it was to have breakfast with Lord Fielding who was stopping over at the Bishop's house,<sup>5</sup> or on the next August 20 when he had to come with Tempier to discuss business items.<sup>6</sup>

Bishop de Mazenod still found these visits too infrequent: he often reproached him about it. On July 26, 1853, he wrote: "I waited in vain for you on Sunday and Monday. It seems that there are more urgent affairs than those you are to treat with me. That is not acceptable."<sup>7</sup> In 1855, he confided to Father Bellon: "I am deprived of a secretary too busy in his tasks that he fulfills at Montolivet and elsewhere to have the time to be at my service. Next year, if God gives me life, I shall try to organize things differently than the way necessity has forced me to do this year."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mazenod to Aubert, November 20, 1833. *Oblate Writings* 9, p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> Mazenod to Vincens, June 13, 1851. *Oblate Writings* 11, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> Bishop de Mazenod named him constantly in his letters to Oblates. So, he saw him often and brought him up to date on all Congregation matters.

<sup>5</sup> *Oblate Writings* 11, p. 108.

<sup>6</sup> Mazenod to Tempier, August 20, 1853, *Oblate Writings* 11, p. 161.

<sup>7</sup> *Oblate Writings* 11, p. 152; the same remark on August 30, 1855, *Oblate Writings* 11, p. 280.

<sup>8</sup> Mazenod to Bellon, May 17, 1855. *Oblate Writings* 11, p. 267.

Father Aubert was named Assistant in 1856. He saw the Superior General even more often. The latter didn't complain any more about being alone. They corresponded regularly when Bishop de Mazenod, as Senator, went to spend several months at Paris at the beginning of each year. On February 16, 1859, the latter reproached Father Tempier for not having written, not like Father Aubert "who has already written me twice."<sup>9</sup>

The Oblates knew that the Superior General and his secretary often worked together. That's why they wrote to the latter to have him inform Father General of their needs, ask him to remind him of promises made, and to intercede with him.<sup>10</sup> Even more frequently they wrote directly to the Founder but invited him to reply in care of his secretary, or told him that they had already written or would write to Father Aubert on the same subject.<sup>11</sup>

In 1856, Father Sigaud was sorry that Bishop de Mazenod had too easily believed some false accusations and added: "I am compromised, blackened ... in your own eyes and before Father Aubert, your confidant."<sup>12</sup>

### *Effective Collaborator*

If Bishop de Mazenod placed so much confidence in Father Aubert, it was because he appreciated his talents, exactitude, dedication and capacity for work. In 1842, he referred to him in these words: "my life's consolation," "the support of my old age."<sup>13</sup> Father Aubert was actually the support of the Founder's old age by helping him to carry out his duties as Superior General. Already in 1848, the latter admitted to Father Semeria that he relied on "the faithful and incomparable Father

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<sup>9</sup> *Oblate Writings* 12, p. 128.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. for example, Verdet to Aubert, February 4, 1847, Berthuel to Aubert, June 6, 1855 and August 24, 1856, De Veronico to Aubert, February 24, 1857.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Mille to Mazenod, December 1, 1846, Verdet to Mazenod, December 23, 1847, Martin to Mazenod, March 6, August 8, 1848, Magnan to Mazenod, February 12, 1849, Dassy to Mazenod, August 10, 1853, etc.

<sup>12</sup> Sigaud to Mazenod, September 3, 1856.

<sup>13</sup> Mazenod to Aubert, July 27, 1842, *Oblate Writings* 3, p. 1.

Aubert who copes with everything with admirable efficiency and presence of mind."<sup>14</sup>

As we have seen, the Secretary wrote numerous letters to Oblates in the Founder's name,<sup>15</sup> but he likewise addressed letters at times and carried them to the post office "without the least delay so as not to miss the post."<sup>16</sup> We understand that the Superior General always regretfully allowed his secretary to go away, deemed indispensable in other places at that time. But he suffered by these absences in the first years especially for affective reasons, whereas later it was for practical reasons since Father Aubert had become necessary for the smooth functioning of the secretariate.

In 1834-1835, the novices were sent to Aix. The Founder was sad to see his novice master depart but resigned himself to the "sacrifice that the needs of the Congregation and thus of the Church impose on us. ..."<sup>17</sup> The novitiate was transferred to Notre Dame du Laus in 1835-1836 after the cholera epidemic. Bishop de Mazenod invited Father Aubert to write often: "You understand that it is already a lot to be deprived of your presence and to make the sacrifice of your pleasant company for the Congregation's sake,"<sup>18</sup> he confided.

After Father Aubert's departure for England in 1842, the Superior General deplored the disorganization of his secretariate and the difficulties he encountered to get help for himself, "Your absence, apart from making me suffer, has put us in a complete disarray and has brought on me every imaginable annoyance from those of your confreres who have never looked to the Congregation for anything but what suits their own houses. Oh! the stupid attitude these people have! It is enough to make me lose patience!"<sup>19</sup>

Bishop de Mazenod spoke again in 1848 of the overload of work that these absences imposed on him. On November 10, 1849, he begged

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<sup>14</sup> Mazenod to Semeria, May 9, 1848, *Oblate Writings* 4, p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> On November 17, 1853, Father Pasqualini de Vico thanked the Founder for having promptly replied to his request through the intermediary of Reverend Father Ober.

<sup>16</sup> Mazenod to Grandin, October 1858, to Vegreville, December 13, 1859. *Oblate Writings* 2, pp. 194, 221.

<sup>17</sup> Mazenod to Aubert, April 7, 1835. *Oblate Writings* 8, p. 154.

<sup>18</sup> Mazenod to Aubert, May 16, 1836. *Oblate Writings* 8, p. 229.

<sup>19</sup> Mazenod to Aubert, July 27 and September 26, 1842. *Oblate Writings* 3, p. 2.

pardon from Father Semeria at Jaffna for having lost the date of his last letter. He added: "All I know is that it was a long time ago, and this gives me great pain ... Father Aubert is still in England where his presence is considered necessary, and it is that which is crushing me with work. Remember too that I have to copy myself the letters of which I like to keep a record."<sup>20</sup> On the following November 24, he also asked forgiveness from Father Aubert who had reproached him for not replying to some important letters. He continued: "What a scene my desk is! At this moment, there are at least 150 letters, amongst which a great number are waiting for a reply. Is it my fault? No, a thousand times, no! It is yours ... !"<sup>21</sup>

In 1858, he did not know where to address a letter to Bishop Grandin. He admitted to him: "Only Father Aubert can tell me how to proceed, and when he is not with me I lose courage."<sup>22</sup>

*Beloved Son. Mutual Affection.*

Being very sensitive, Bishop de Mazenod's heart never resisted marks of affection and gratitude. It seems that Father Aubert's resembled his in that. Several times in his correspondence, the Founder expressed his affection for him and on April 7, 1835, justified in some way his sentiments: "My dear son, the joy that your letters give me, with the very tender and touching sentiments that you convey so beautifully in them, would be altogether excessive were it not that the anguish I experience in living separated from a child so much loved and so worthy of that love, on whom my tenderest affections rest and whose presence has always been balm for my soul, is corrective enough for the too lively emotions of my heart. I resign myself to the sacrifice that the needs of the Congregation and of the Church impose upon us, duty demands no more. Nor will I go any further as that is not the teaching I hear at the school of Martha, Magdalen and Lazarus, of St. John, St. Peter and Jesus Christ himself. So much the worse for those who wouldn't understand. They cannot make me see in the Gospel what is

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<sup>20</sup> *Oblate Writings* 4, p. 41; see also the letter of January 17, 1850. *Oblate Writings* 4, p. 47.

<sup>21</sup> *Oblate Writings* 3, p. 45.

<sup>22</sup> Mazenod to Grandin, October 1858. *Oblate Writings* 2, p. 194.

not there and I read there very clearly something they do not understand, something which we two feel in a wonderful way.”<sup>23</sup>

In other letters of 1835 and 1836, he adds: “My dear Child, I dislike having to resort to the pen to express the ineffable feelings of my heart. Happily your gentle soul understands mine without need of speech, and I too miss nothing of what issues from yours. My love attracts and unites your heart to mine, independently of distance that can separate us only physically.”<sup>24</sup> “I get a lot of pleasure from your letters. I will go as far as to say that they do me a lot of good. And at the same time isn’t a man entitled rather to want to make use of what is his: now you know that you and I are one in spirit, quite apart from the supernatural bonds that bind us so closely. ...”<sup>25</sup>

On June 13, 1836, he reproaches him for working too much among the pilgrims at Notre Dame du Laus and continues: “My dear son, you are spoiling me by the moving and affectionate tone of your letters. There really isn’t any great merit in giving one’s tender love to a child like you. I forestalled you, no more than that. Everything else follows naturally. Have you ever caused me a single moment’s pain since I’ve adopted you? Isn’t it rather that your soul and mine in some way mingled from the moment we met and since that first moment has there ever been the least interruption, the least cloud? Far from it. How could I not enjoy a friendship that hasn’t known a moment’s lapse when there have been so many ingrates to rend apart my paternal feelings. ...”<sup>26</sup>

On June 27, 1837 the Founder wrote in his diary: “Father Aubert’s letter, such as this admirable Father knows how to write them, that is, full of piety, feeling, and tender affection. ...”<sup>27</sup>

After that, these expressions diminished, but always continued even if less expressive of tenderness. Father Aubert truly was the consolation of the Founder’s life and the support of his old age. The latter undoubtedly was preparing him to someday succeed him as Superior General. One can understand why, as we shall see, his sadness was so lively and continued when Father Aubert died suddenly in 1860.

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<sup>23</sup> *Oblate Writings* 8, pp. 153-154.

<sup>24</sup> *Oblate Writings* 8, p. 202.

<sup>25</sup> *Oblate Writings* 8, p. 228.

<sup>26</sup> *Oblate Writings* 8, pp. 237-238.

<sup>27</sup> *Missions OMI* 1874, p. 195.

## VIII

## TALENTS, CHARACTER, VIRTUES

In 1850, Bishop de Mazenod wrote to Father Pierre Aubert, a missionary in Canada: Your brother is “typical as ever of his fine character and of his ever admirable zeal and virtue; he is a model of religious perfection; he is as good of heart as of mind. God blesses all his works. He has just worked prodigies in the mission of Manchester. They will recur in that of Liverpool which he is giving at this moment.”<sup>1</sup>

There we have a rather well-outlined portrait of Father Casimir Aubert, as he appeared in the correspondence of Oblates and in the preceding pages. In this chapter we will give an overall view, underlining some of his more characteristic qualities.

*“God blesses all his efforts”*

Father Casimir Aubert received from the Lord numerous talents that he knew how to develop. We have seen that, according to the needs and practices at the Congregation’s beginnings, he was called on to do everything: teach, direct youth, hear confessions, preach, act as pastor and missionary-founder, administrate and direct.

At his death, Father Rey wrote that no “kind of work was foreign to him,”<sup>2</sup> and Father d’Herbomez affirmed that this Father, through his virtues and talents, “formed one of the most beautiful ornaments, one of the strongest supports of our dear Congregation.”<sup>3</sup>

We recall that Father Aubert was named professor in 1854 at the opening of Montolivet. Father Berthuel congratulated him on it and raised him to the level of Father Tempier, superior of the house: “You

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<sup>1</sup> Mazenod to Pierre Aubert, March 16, 1850. *Oblate Writings* 1, p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> *La Gazette du Midi*, January 19, 1860, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> D’Herbomez to Mazenod, April 29, 1860.

are inaugurating a new era for our Congregation," he wrote ... "It was also fitting that this new phase of our Society should be opened and placed under the auspices of two men to which the Congregation in some way owes it continuation. ..."<sup>4</sup>

Among Father Aubert's talents, it is only fitting to underline two which were particularly useful at the beginning of the Congregation. While being a zealous missionary and a good administrator, he was likewise a man of study and office work. At that time, Oblates were outstanding for their zeal, but few of them loved study and gave time to it. Bishop de Mazenod succeeded with difficulty to find professors to teach in the several seminaries directed by his sons, and only allowed three or four of them (Vincens, Dassy, Gondrand) to preach to clergy or in cathedrals since he judged the others to be weak intellectually and ill prepared for important preaching assignments. He was quite aware of his men's value and talents. We understand well why he chose Father Aubert as secretary. Besides, the latter was one of the first Oblates, along with Fathers Suzanne, Dassy and Jeancard, to publish writings.

Father Aubert was also suited to business matters, no doubt a talent he inherited from his father who was a merchant. With him it seemed a matter of virtue as much as a natural talent. It was out of love for his house of Le Calvaire and of the Congregation that he found means of earning money. In spite of several costly repair works to the house and church of Le Calvaire, this community always gave significant contributions to the general funds,<sup>5</sup> while other houses only knew how to ask for help.

What means did he invent? The faithful at Le Calvaire and at Notre Dame de la Garde used to donate many Mass intentions which Father Aubert distributed especially among the Fathers at the seminaries at Ajaccio and Fréjus, deprived of any remuneration. He kept the money and paid with materials. He used to send old books and priestly vestments that the Fathers had to sell to seminarians and priests. Fathers Moreau and Magnan, superiors of the seminary at Ajaccio, and even those at Fréjus after 1850, often complained about this way of acting to

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<sup>4</sup> Berthuel to Mazenod, s.d., [fall 1854].

<sup>5</sup> Father Victor Gaben, in the *Chronique du Calvaire*, often gives a report of the finances of Le Calvaire and of the amounts turned over to the general fund.



which however they, out of necessity, resigned themselves.<sup>6</sup> Nothing illustrates their reactions better than Father Magnan's letter of May 9, 1848 in which this Father very vivaciously and clearly expressed his thinking: I am "really surprised that you have never offered me any money, whereas on the other hand your store supply of vestments never runs dry; I'm beginning to think that it is a trick of your trade and that you sell your sacristy supplies for rather good sums; in that case, I will soon have a general second-hand store, and since I want to make a little money when I resell, it may happen that in the end our poor Corsican pastors will pay exorbitant prices for rags. What does it matter, so send all the rejects from your sacristy and silence to every tongue that would dare to blaspheme by saying that you were not born to be a merchant. My dear friend, you make golden money deals and I would vote that you be entrusted with Father Tempier's bank or be associated with him in the republic's pressing needs ... So send your leftovers, your poverty will again be our richness; I would hope that after the antique copes and old chasubles there will follow old chandeliers, then old chairs, and after that old books from your library, and whatever else? You want to have everything new which is a bit insulting to the public destitution, however you are not an evil rich man, since you throw your scraps to poor Lazarus's. ..." <sup>7</sup>

*"Typical as ever of his fine character"*

A few words, always the same, speak of Father Aubert's character: goodness, mildness, affability.

Most Oblates described him as "good" and "mild."<sup>8</sup> Father Nicolas even wrote: "If one could say that a creature had infinite godness, you would have to say it of Father Aubert."<sup>9</sup> The Founder even invited him

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Moreau to Tempier, January 29 and December 1, 1842; Magnan to Aubert, May 9, 1848, January 23 and February 6 and 21, 1854; Berthuel to Aubert, April 19 and May 23, 1856, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Magnan to Aubert, May 9, 1848.

<sup>8</sup> Abbé Gamel to Mazenod, January 1860; Mazenod to Semeria, July 8, 1860; Jouvent to Mazenod, January 1860, in *Notices nécrologiques*, VI, p. 125; Mazenod to Oblates, February 1, 1860.

<sup>9</sup> Nicolas to Aubert, s.d.

to be more firm on this point,<sup>10</sup> and especially to be more prudent in choosing postulants. On July 26, 1853, for example, he wrote to him: "Who is this *insipid young fellow* who came to ask, in your name, permission to make a retreat? Let's not get caught again for the fiftieth time. In these matters, you do not have a deft hand. Beware of your goodness. Follow your discernment rather than your heart. You have been too often deceived to not be on your guard."<sup>11</sup> On June 21 the following year, the Superior General warned Father Vincens "not yet to admit to novitiate the postulant Lacroix whom Father Aubert out of over-confidence directed [to him]."<sup>12</sup>

Other expressions that are found in Oblate correspondence have the same inference to describe Father Aubert: "forever gracious,"<sup>13</sup> "affability of his aimiable character,"<sup>14</sup> "serenity of his character,"<sup>15</sup> "reports filled with goodness [which] merited for him deep feelings of sympathy,"<sup>16</sup> among "the most loved" Oblates.<sup>17</sup> Among friends and admirers was Father Gondrand who said, in writing to the Founder: Father Aubert "so well represents your fatherly heart in my regard."<sup>18</sup>

### *"Model of religious perfection"*

Father Aubert always loved and served the Congregation well, certainly through his dedication but also by his example of perfect regularity. During his novitiate in 1826-1827, he conducted himself "like an angel"<sup>19</sup> and "already then gave the example of fervor equal to every trial."<sup>20</sup> We have seen in his retreat notes how, during his scholasticate,

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<sup>10</sup> Mazenod to Aubert, January 3, 1836. *Oblate Writings* 8, p. 207.

<sup>11</sup> *Oblate Writings* 11, p. 153.

<sup>12</sup> *Oblate Writings* 11, p. 199.

<sup>13</sup> Rambert to Fabre, August 27, 1859.

<sup>14</sup> Mazenod to Oblates, Feb. 12, 1860, to Semeria, July 8, 1860. *Oblate Writings* 12, p. 177; 4, p. 153.

<sup>15</sup> A. Rey, in *La Gazette du Midi*, January 19, 1860, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Abbé Gamel to Mazenod, February 1860, in Rey II, p. 770.

<sup>18</sup> Gondrand to Mazenod, October 14, 1858.

<sup>19</sup> Guibert to Mazenod, January 1860, in Rey II, p. 768.

<sup>20</sup> A. Rey, in *La Gazette du Midi*, January 19, 1860, p. 2.

he worked at overcoming his defects and at getting to know, love and imitate Christ. Several times he spoke of his attachment to community life and how much he appreciated the mutual edification which he especially derived from it during retreats.<sup>21</sup> He always liked the common life and admitted that he had suffered from living six months outside of Oblate communities during his stay in Ireland in 1842-1843.<sup>22</sup>

His habits of regularity became stronger when he was Novice Master and he kept them up during all his later life. That alone would have endeared him to Bishop de Mazenod who had insisted so much on this point among his sons.<sup>23</sup>

The Oblates went habitually on foot to missions "like Our Lord on the paths of Galilee." Father Aubert and his novices during summer used to go to spend a few days at Notre Dame de Lumières and would walk from Marseilles (80 km.).<sup>24</sup> In spring of 1843, Father Aubert went to stay with Father Daly at Penzance. On Holy Thursday evening, the carriage dropped him off at 23 miles (37 km.) from Penzance. He planned to spend Good Friday with his brother Oblate. He didn't wait for the next day's coach but walked all night and arrived very early in the morning and, as if it was nothing, made his meditation with Father Daly. Before dinner, he noticed that the cook was preparing some fish. He stopped him and asked him to make a simple soup for that day according to the Congregation's tradition.<sup>25</sup>

Father Rey wrote that "in fulfilling all his duties, [Father Aubert] knew how to reconcile religious perfection with the most ardent efforts of zeal. ... Numerous occupations didn't diminish at all the religious spirit that animated him. His regularity was always beyond reproach; it might be said that it contributed immensely to shortening his life. He could never think himself indisposed or ill. The first at prayer, he was the last to take a rest. ..." <sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Retreat of 1830, [p. 29], of 1832, [p. 5].

<sup>22</sup> Aubert to Mazenod, April 28, 1843, in Ortolan I, p. 529.

<sup>23</sup> Y.B. *Le Fondateur et l'observance des CC. et RR. d'après ses écrits*, in *Vie Oblate Life*, Vol. 43 (1948), pp. 81-112.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Abbé Redon, *Vie du Père Françon, OMI* ... Avignon, 1902, p. 52.

<sup>25</sup> P. Richard, *Chronique de la province d'Angleterre*, p. 1. Father Aubert had walked also in January after meeting Bishop Baines.

<sup>26</sup> A. Rey, in *Gazette du Midi*, January 19, 1860, p. 2.

As Provincial and Canonical Visitor, Father Aubert always insisted on the observance of the Rules. In 1857, Father De Veronico wrote to him from Vico: "We will try to compensate you for your troubles by consoling God with virtues through putting into practice your instructions on religious observances. We all know that it would be the only recompense you would seek in this world."<sup>27</sup>

His love for the Congregation appeared in his life dedicated to its service but also in his interest in vocations. As a disciple of Father Guibert, Father Aubert was also a good recruiter. He was always preoccupied with finding postulants and forming them well. He sent young men to the juniorate at Lumières in 1840-1842<sup>28</sup> and attempted to reopen this juniorate in 1859.<sup>29</sup> We have seen that he sent several Irish candidates to the novitiate. He helped to form them well by assisting the Novice Master at Notre Dame de l'Osier during the summers of 1842 and 1843. He thus contributed in reviving the novices' missionary ideal. In the *Codex Historicus* of Notre Dame de l'Osier, we read this: "On [June] 20, [1843], Father Casimir Aubert, former novice master at Marseilles, arrived from England. ... When he told about the opening of a new house in the midst of Anglicans, of the good that had already been done there through its ministry and what was being prepared, every heart among the novices was electrified; everyone wanted to accompany him and share in his efforts and conquests. ..."<sup>30</sup>

Several Oblates congratulated him for his work with the Founder and his service to the Congregation. Father Berthuel wrote to him in 1855: "I was sorry that your duties did not allow you to go into some details which touch the heart by their interest. Nothing could have been more agreeable to us than the growth and glory of our little society. You are working at its very heart and it is easy for you to be acquainted with its energy; it is in good hands; the future looks bright and prosperous. God and souls are a worthy goal for your zeal and efforts. Once again, take good care of yourself for the common good."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> De Veronico to Aubert, May 10, 1857.

<sup>28</sup> Honorat to Tempier, October 23, 1840, May 24, 1841; Martin to Mazenod, March 18, 1842, March 27, 1848, etc.

<sup>29</sup> *Missions OMI* 1863, p. 494.

<sup>30</sup> *Missions OMI* 1892, p. 420.

<sup>31</sup> Berthuel to Aubert, May 17, 1855 and August 24, 1856.

Having learnt that the Provincial was going to make a Canonical Visitation of the house at Vico in 1855, Father De Veronico wrote to him: "Come and communicate to us the spirit of life that you drink so often at its source; I mean the love and purest attachment to our holy Rules and that primitive spirit of the sons of Mary Immaculate which is evaporating more or less evidently and which needs to be renewed by contact with model hearts."<sup>32</sup>

On January 23, 1860, Father Gondrand offered his sympathy to the Founder and added: Father Aubert was "providence for your work, the living law, perfection in action to benefit each of us ... Every one of your sons should desire this heritage of virtues and filial devotion."

In his circular letter of February 1, 1860, Bishop de Mazenod recognized that Father Aubert was "the living example of all religious virtues ... his whole life was dedicated to the good welfare of the Congregation."<sup>33</sup>

*"Admirable zeal and virtue"*

No one doubted Father Aubert's zeal but, if the Oblates had presented his case to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, the devil's advocate would have found here and there, in the correspondance of his contemporaries, some critical remarks about his virtues. Those brought up by Father Telmon who accused the Provincial of poor administration and unkept promises, would undoubtedly carry little weight since they manifestly arose from someone prone to criticism. Likewise, we cannot take into account accusations made by some Oblates at the time they were leaving the Congregation. In 1846, for example, Alexandre Augier wanted to retrieve the books he had left at Marseilles, but Father Aubert refused to send them to him since he had not repayed the sum of money lent him at the time of his dispensation from vows. Alexandre, who on September 24 called Father Aubert an "excellent Father that it pleased Divine Providence to take away from me," wrote to Father Tempier on December 29: "[Father Aubert's] reply was not at all what I had expected. Not only was it unfavorable, but it wasn't even honest. Even

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<sup>32</sup> De Veronico to Aubert, December 16, 1855.

<sup>33</sup> Circular of February 1, 1860. *Oblate Writings* 12, p. 224.

more, it was insulting to the highest degree since it implied that I had formal ill will to lose the money that you had the goodness to furnish me ...”<sup>34</sup> In 1855, César Aubry insisted in vain on obtaining a dispensation from his vows. The Secretary General had to reprimand him; the latter complained about it, accusing Father Aubert of being “impolite and lacking in charity.”<sup>35</sup>

Bishop de Mazenod’s accusations were more serious. Actually, the Founder’s affection for his favorite son didn’t hinder him from objectively assessing him nor did it lead him to blindly approving everything the latter decided on or carried out. We have already seen several examples.

In 1836, he reproached him for excessive zeal in leaving the novices alone so as to take part in the “saintly escapade” of a “fortuitous mission.”<sup>36</sup> That same year he thoroughly disapproved of “the novice master’s indiscreet pilgrimage to the Grande Chartreuse,” when one should allow oneself “only trips required by ministry.”<sup>37</sup> In 1837, he blamed him for not having taken the three weeks vacation imposed on him and wasn’t afraid of accusing him of disobedience, saying: “When one is sent to teach solid virtues to others, one must not behave in a way that would hardly be permissible to the inconsiderate fervor of a novice.”<sup>38</sup>

Several other reproaches concern once more an excess of zeal, and to a certain point a lack of prudence. In 1843, Bishop de Mazenod was not pleased with the ease with which Father Aubert tended to give in to the inadmissible conditions of Bishop Murphy regarding the plan for an Oblate seminary at Cork.<sup>39</sup> In 1851, he complained about the Provincial “I do not know what has come over him, [he] has just sent to Canada eight men who were in England.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Alex. Augier to Tempier, December 29, 1846.

<sup>35</sup> Aubry to Mazenod, November 8, 1855.

<sup>36</sup> Mazenod to Tempier, February 17, 1836, *Oblate Writings* 8, p. 216.

<sup>37</sup> Mazenod to Mille, August 23-25, 1836. *Oblate Writings* 8, p. 242.

<sup>38</sup> Mazenod to Aubert, October 14, 1837, *Oblate Writings* 9, p. 66.

<sup>39</sup> Mazenod to Aubert, February 19, 1843, *Oblate Writings* 3, pp. 5-6.

<sup>40</sup> Mazenod to Semeria, March 12, 1851, *Oblate Writings* 4, p. 61.

The Founder did not agree with Father Aubert on some other occasions. That was the case when the latter wrote to Bishop Barnabò to have the Oblate Superior General invited to the ceremonies of the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854,<sup>41</sup> or when he allowed Father Dassy to preach a mission in French in a Provence village in 1855.<sup>42</sup> Or once again when he wrote to Archbishop Debelay of Avignon to denounce the pastor of Orange to him; the latter, after asking Father Pierre Nicolas to preach a lenten series in his parish, refused at the last minute to allow him to come.<sup>43</sup> Wanting to preserve this letter, Father Aubert recopied it in the Register of important letters. Bishop de Mazenod read it some time later and wrote in the margin of the Register: "I deeply regret that Father Provincial had the unfortunate idea of sending this letter to the Archbishop of Avignon. I do not approve of the content or the form."

On the other hand, Bishop de Mazenod and the Oblates continually praised Father Aubert's virtues. In 1834, Father Dassy stated: "Ten religious like him would set the world on fire."<sup>44</sup> In 1841, Father Martin called him: "a virtuous and precious brother Oblate." Brother Jouvent was amazed in admiring the virtues of the deceased in 1860: "What clear-sighted charity! What zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls! What a life of dedication and sacrifice!"<sup>45</sup> The Abbé Gamel, a childhood friend of the deceased, spoke of the "holy Father Aubert," and wished that the Founder would have thousands of sons "as virtuous, learned and zealous."<sup>46</sup> Likewise, Father Rey wrote: "this holy priest ... never refused to render a service. Many unfortunate people found abundant help in his inexhaustable charity. The tears which accompanied him to the tomb were a proof of how many needy people he had comforted."<sup>47</sup> On the occasion of the Superiors' retreat in 1864 at Autun, Father l'Hermitte once again recalled the memory of the deceased,

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<sup>41</sup> Mazenod to Barnabò, September 19, 1854. To the Propagation of the Faith.

<sup>42</sup> Dassy to Mazenod, February 1, 1855.

<sup>43</sup> Aubert to Bishop Debelay, March 26, 1859. AGR, Register of Letters 1855-1863.

<sup>44</sup> Dassy to Mazenod, May 6, 1834.

<sup>45</sup> Martin to Mazenod, May 18, 1841 and *Notices nécrologiques* VI, p. 125.

<sup>46</sup> Abbé Gamel to Mazenod, January 1860, in Rey II, p. 770.

<sup>47</sup> A. Rey in *La Gazette du Midi*, January 19, 1860, p. 2.

calling him: "a model of unlimited dedication, both among the foundations in Great Britain and at the side of the Father of us all."<sup>48</sup>

Bishop de Mazenod especially recognized and praised the virtues of his confidant and faithful collaborator. We have already quoted numerous excerpts of his letters written while Father Aubert was alive. He didn't succeed fully in overcoming his chagrin nor his admiration in 1860. The deceased man's virtues and praises roll out one after the other from his pen. In his diary at the end of January we read: "The holy, incomparable Father Aubert," "that chosen one, God's friend, that blessed one." "I distinctly felt that I was in the presence of a precious relic, a holy body."<sup>49</sup> In the circular of February 1, he spoke of the "fervor of this elite soul" which "never wavered." "You know his zeal and devotedness, his great piety, modesty, rare intelligence, the steadfastness of his principles tempered by the gentleness and graciousness of his amiable character, his love for regularity, spirit of mortification, detachment from the things of the earth, his charity for all his brothers and the constant desire that was his to serve each one. ..." <sup>50</sup>

Writing to Bishop Guibert and to Fathers Gaudet and Semeria in January and July, 1860, he used the expressions: "the perfect person,"<sup>51</sup> "the admirable, precious, inestimable,"<sup>52</sup> Father Aubert, "so good, so kind, so admirable ... he is a loss to all those whom he edified, whom he helped, whom he encouraged, and whom he carried with him by his advice and most of all by his example."<sup>53</sup>

The great Orders possess their own martyrology or catalogue of saints. In his heart, Bishop de Mazenod had his own for the Oblates where Father Aubert had a special place beside Fathers V. Arnoux, C.D. Albini, F.N. Moreau, Brothers L. Morandini and F.M. Camper, etc.

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<sup>48</sup> *Missions 1864*, p. 299.

<sup>49</sup> Mazenod Diary, January 1860, in Rey II, pp. 766-767.

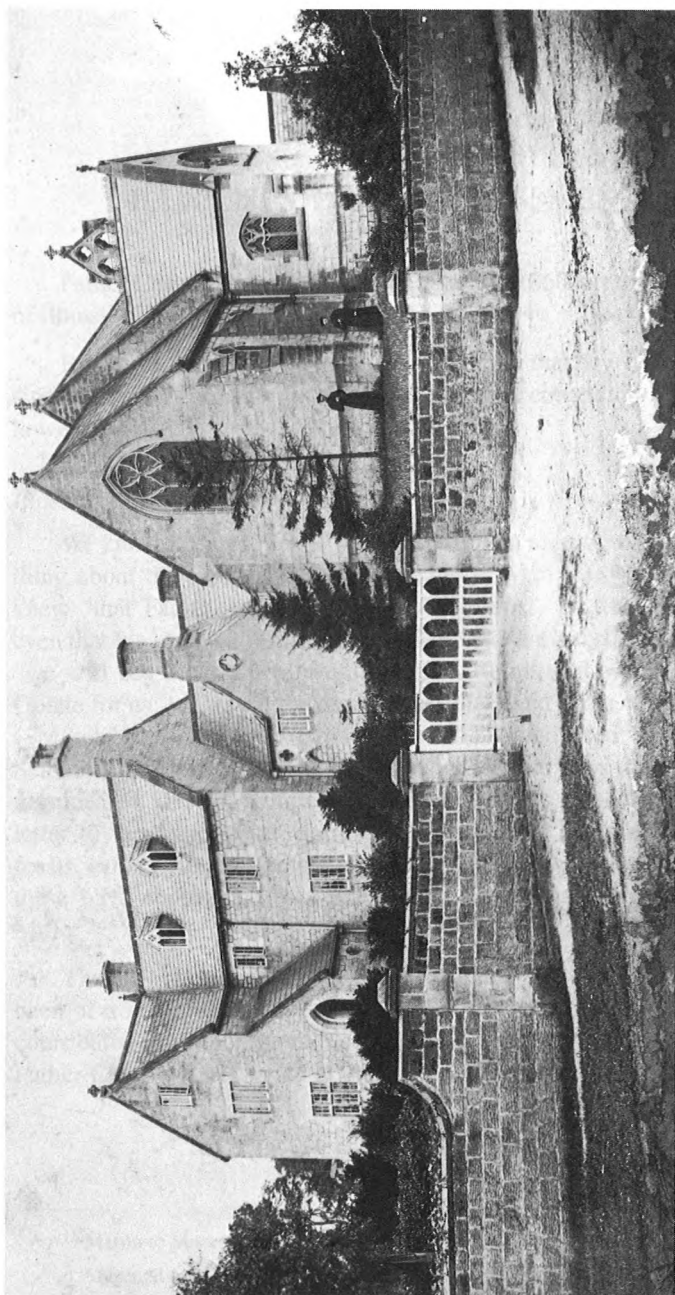
<sup>50</sup> *Oblate Writings* 12, p. 224.

<sup>51</sup> Mazenod to Guibert, January 18, 1860; *Oblate Writings* 12, p. 175.

<sup>52</sup> Mazenod to Gaudet, June 1, 1860; *Oblate Writings* 2, p. 229.

<sup>53</sup> Mazenod to Semeria, July 8, 1860; *Oblate Writings* 4, p. 153.





Sicklinghall: scholasticate from 1852 onwards. Later, this house became a juniorate, novitiate and a retreat house.



## IX

## ILLNESSES, DEATH, ASSESSMENTS

Father Casimir Aubert died on January 17, 1860, after several hours of illness.

Bishop de Mazenod often suggested to him that he avoid overwork since he considered him to be of rather fragile constitution. The latter however had been seriously sick only twice.

*Illnesses*

We know from a letter of Father Martin, on mission at Aups, something about the first incident of ill-health in March 1841. This Father knew "that Father Aubert had been dangerously ill for several days, even that his loss was imminent. My God what a misfortune!" he wrote, "we will beg the Lord to preserve this virtuous and precious brother Oblate for us."<sup>1</sup> It was at the time of the illness and death of Fathers Mie (+March 10, 1841) and Paris (+April 11), who died at the Major Seminary in Marseilles. The Founder, whose diary for this period has disappeared, did not mention these events except by these words in a letter to the Superior at Notre Dame du Laus: "Holy Week and the feasts, care of our sick, concern for their danger, sorrow at their loss, all these have contributed to delay my writing to you, my dear Father Mille."<sup>2</sup>

The only photograph that exists of Father Aubert shows him to have been of a neat, rather slender build. His sedentary lifestyle must have contributed to rounding out his frame. In a letter to his brother, Victor, Father Charles Baret wrote in 1851: "You would probably really laugh

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<sup>1</sup> Martin to Mazenod, March 18, 1841.

<sup>2</sup> Mazenod to Mille, April 16, 1841. *Oblate Writings* 9, p. 168.

if, when we see each other again, you find me to have gotten fatter something like Father Aubert for example ... *quod dii avertant!*"<sup>3</sup>

In 1855, Father Aubert was again "suddenly struck down with a brain paralysis which robbed him of every physical and moral capacity," as Bishop de Mazenod informed Father Conrad at Notre Dame de Sion on March 19. He had just learned of the death of Father Lacombe in Ceylon and of Father Dorey at Notre Dame de Sion. He added: "I spent the night near the bed of this dear Father in despair of ever seeing him regain life. Happily we were prompt to cry out to the Lord and we have been heard: the Father has regained consciousness and we have hopes of saving him. But I leave you to imagine my chagrin."<sup>4</sup> We learn more of this illness from a letter of Father Tempier. "Father Aubert has really put us in a dither these past few days. An acute erysipelas brought on a brain hemorrhage which left him in a coma and made us fear a catastrophe; fortunately, he has come out of that alarming condition and is out of danger today."<sup>5</sup>

The sick man recovered in several weeks. While convalescing at Montolivet he received a note from the Founder on March 31: "My dear Father Aubert, as I rejoice in the fact that you are better, I am far from convinced that you do not need more care. I was deterred from going and giving you some directives on the spot. I can't do that any more today than tomorrow. So it is in writing that I notify you that you are to suspend all the ministry you were doing in Marseilles until you will have fully recovered, a fact that I reserve to my own judgment. ..."<sup>6</sup>

In mid April, he was well enough again to prepare a long report on the needs the Oblate missions for the Council of the Propagation of the Faith.<sup>7</sup> News of his illness and cure had rapidly spread throughout the Congregation. Father De Veronico wrote from Vico on April 13: "Very Reverend Father, thanks for having the good inspiration of looking after yourself. You had us all terribly worried. For the love of God, may

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Baret to Victor, December 29, 1851.

<sup>4</sup> Mazenod to Conrad, March 19, 1855. *Oblate Writings* 11, p. 259.

<sup>5</sup> *Oblate Writings* II, 2, p. 159.

<sup>6</sup> *Oblate Writings* 11, p. 262.

<sup>7</sup> Mazenod to Aubert, April 16, 1855, *Oblate Writings* 11, p. 263.

examples like that from so high up not happen to us! We prayed ardently and will continue to do so in order that the good Lord will deign to work a continuous miracle since you are incorrigible in the matter of rest. ...”<sup>8</sup> Even Father Telmon, usually not all that compassionate for his brother-Oblate, stopped complaining for a while. To the Founder, he expressed himself: “I thought it would be completely inopportune to talk to you about absolutely secondary business matters. It would have been inconvenient as well, since I understood the extent of your sadness and preoccupations. Father Aubert’s prompt and complete rehabilitation took a great weight off of your mind and consoled all those who are familiar with and appreciate the merit of this Father. As for myself, I rejoiced as much for you as for the esteem and attachment I have for him.”<sup>9</sup> On May 10, Father Berthuel wrote to Father Aubert from the seminary at Romans: “I left it to our excellent Father Nicolas to inform you of how fully I shared in the sorrow felt by all those who love you at the time of your unfortunate mishap in March; we were deeply saddened at the first news. ... Take care of yourself a little more. When you live for the family, you can cling to this world, without compromising your salvation. ...”<sup>10</sup>

Similar sentiments are found in the letters of Father Gondrand and Bishop Allard. The first reproached Father Aubert for working too hard, the second said that it was with “equal gratitude that he had received news of the Congregation’s progress and Father Aubert’s recovery.”<sup>11</sup>

### *Death*

On Tuesday, January 17, 1860, there wasn’t even time to worry about it. Father Aubert died at 8 o’clock in the evening, from a stroke it seems, which carried him away in two hours. He was not yet fifty.

At 10 p.m., Father Sardou announced the sad news to the Superiors: “A terrible blow has just struck our house at Le Calvaire and the whole Congregation. Our excellent Father Aubert rendered his soul to God

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<sup>8</sup> De Veronico to Aubert, April 13, 1855.

<sup>9</sup> Telmon to Mazenod, April 24, 1855.

<sup>10</sup> Berthuel to Aubert, May 10, 1855.

<sup>11</sup> Gondrand to Aubert, May 12, 1855; Allard to Fabre, August 13, 1855.

scarcely a few hours ago. It was almost a sudden death; he went to bed at 6 o'clock with a violent headache and was dead at 8 o'clock. Father Fabre whom I had hastily called, was with him in his last moments. The Bishop arrived after he had died. We are filled with consternation!"<sup>12</sup>

Before going to bed, the Founder noted in his diary: "The holy, incomparable Father Casimir Aubert has died suddenly! I cover my face, I prostrate myself, I adore, *Nescio loqui!* Let them run, let them run, my tears, that's the most I can do!"<sup>13</sup>

The following day, Bishop de Mazenod broke the news and expressed his sorrow to Archbishop Guibert of Tours: "My dear Lord and good friend, when we are greatly afflicted and have recourse to God, to whom can we go for support if not to those who can comprehend and share one's affliction. And so, my dear and gentle friend, I am separating myself a moment from those who surround me and come to lay an immense sorrow in your bosom. Yesterday, the good Lord took away from us with lightening speed that perfect person whom you brought in to enrich the family. It is not a dream! It is only a certain fact that the dearly loved Father Aubert, who still carried out throughout the day I don't know how many deeds of his charitable ministry, whom I saw in my office at three o'clock full of life, and who, after he had left me, had still run several errands such as visiting the sick, etc. When he had returned to the house, he had a headache and he was dead within two hours, without a struggle or further movement as though he had fallen asleep — as indeed he has fallen asleep in the Lord. The pen is being snatched from my hand. Goodbye!"<sup>14</sup>

### *Funeral*

The funeral was held on the morning of the 19th. Father Rey gave the following narration: "The Bishop offered a Pontifical High Mass in the presence of Bishop Jeancard of Céramis, the Cathedral Chapter,

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<sup>12</sup> Sardou to the Superiors, January 17, 1860.

<sup>13</sup> Mazenod Diary, in Rey II, p. 766.

<sup>14</sup> *Oblate Writings* 12, pp. 174-175.

representatives of religious communities, and a greater number of priests from the city's different parishes. The funeral procession was most imposing. They counted more than 150 clerics ... a solemn homage was thus spontaneously rendered to someone who had been a holy priest, an excellent religious, whose passing left universal regrets."<sup>15</sup>

Several days after the funeral services, Bishop de Mazenod continued writing in his diary after the interruption of the evening of the 17th. He recounted that during dinner at President Luce's home, someone came to inform him of this "thunderbolt." He ran immediately to Le Calvaire where he found Father Aubert already "asleep in the Lord. ... I left without shedding a tear," he continued. "I sadly entered the community room where all the Fathers of Le Calvaire and those of the Major Seminary had gone. There, I felt overcome by the weight of my sadness. I felt smothered. I wanted to return to the Bishop's house, but I had scarcely gotten up when I felt my legs buckling under me and my head swimming to such a degree that I had to steady myself against the wall to avoid falling. With the help of a charitable arm I was able to return to the community room and sit down again where the weight which oppressed me burst out in tears and sobs. That relieved my heart. I was soon able to make my way back to the Bishop's house. Since then, my tears have gently flowed and they flow very often without bitterness whenever I have to talk of the person and works of this son, this precious man carried away at such an inopportune time and so suddenly from my love and the affection of all his brothers."<sup>16</sup>

### *Reaction of the Oblates and friends*

The Oblates well knew to what point Bishop de Mazenod loved Father Aubert and counted on his service. Many wrote to him to express their surprise and sadness at this death but especially to sympathize with his pain. The first letter we have on record came from Bishop Guibert who wrote on January 20: "What a thunderbolt! ... What a loss for the Society, for you and for me who constantly loved this good and dear

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<sup>15</sup> *La Gazette du midi*, January 19, 1860, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Mazenod Diary in Rey II, pp. 766-767.

Father, so worthy of all our affection by his perfect qualities. ...”<sup>17</sup> On the 23rd, Father Gondrand began with these words: “You did not tell me what this thunderbolt is that has just struck us. ... Oh! I am very afraid that I have rightly guessed! What can a person say? My heart is choked with sadness and my eyes are filled with tears. What a loss for you, our venerable Founder! He was providential for your work, the living rule, an example of perfection for each of us. What a desolation for me who have taken him, after yourself in the Congregation, as my father, friend, the supreme and all powerful authority over my heart! When I spoke to you of martyrdom, I did not dream that you would have to endure it so soon in this way! It is an added reason to have a greater filial love for you and to cling to you in memory of that elder son that gave you so much consolation! ... How good it was of you to write of this sad news leaving me to guess what it was! It expressed in a better manner your immense sadness and tender heart. ...”<sup>18</sup>

Father Joseph Arnoux wrote on February 5: “I scarcely dare to come near you, even by letter. Your soul is plunged in so cruel a sorrow! However, I cannot resist uniting my tears with yours to tell you how much your devoted sons at Inchicore share in their beloved Father’s grief. ... What an irreparable loss for our dear Congregation! What a blow to your heart! If it would cost me even a thousand lives to repair it, I would gladly give them, God willing! Only Jacob’s affliction could be compared to yours. Just like the holy patriarch you have lost your favorite son, the one who was to you what the beloved disciple was to our Lord. However, a consoling thought appears, like a ray of light, among these clouds of desolation. He has died, but he lives in heaven with your family’s glorious members. ...”

Several others regretted this departure especially due to their bonds of friendship with Father Aubert and services received. On January 18, Father Dassy also spoke of the “thunderbolt” which left him “dazed, crushed” at having lost his best friend.<sup>19</sup> Father Charles Baret told to his

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<sup>17</sup> Rey II, p. 768.

<sup>18</sup> Gondrand to Mazenod, January 23, cf. also May 1 and September 21, 1860.

<sup>19</sup> Dassy to Mazenod, January 18, in V. Gaben, *Chronique du Calvaire* I, p. 697-698.



brother Victor that the “lightening-speed disappearance of poor Father Aubert” took a benefactor from the family, but added: “What a blow for the Congregation! Our local misfortune is eclipsed by the misfortune of the whole family.”<sup>20</sup> Other letters of sympathy arrived at Marseilles during the year 1860. Still on January 1, 1861, Father Robert Cooke spoke “of our ever regretted Father Aubert.”<sup>21</sup>

### *The Founder's attitude*

These letters that Bishop de Mazenod received for several months continually renewed his grief. He consoled himself by praising the dead man's merits and virtues, but day after day he was aware of the empty space left in his life.

He would have liked to reply to those who wrote him but due to lack of time he decided to send a circular letter to the Oblates on February 1. He began by thanking them and then underlined the gravity of the situation which followed from the loss of a man whose “cooperation was so necessary for me.” In the profound sorrow which overwhelms and rends my heart, I have no greater consolation than that which comes from your charity and filial love. You understood the state of desolation into which the blow that has just struck us has cast my soul and in your kindness you sustained me and softened the bitterness of my sorrow, calmed my anxiety and dried my tears. Be blessed, my sons! I pray God that he will reward you for the good that you have shown me by giving you longer life so that you may increase the merits of your ministry in a long succession of years spent serving the Church from within our dear family. This wish, my dear children, is inspired by reflection on the immense loss we have just sustained through the premature death of our well-beloved and forever regretted Father Aubert. ...”

The Founder described after that the dead man's virtues and ended with an act of submission to the will of God: “Is this murmuring that comes forth from within me? O, dear God, no! I know that you have

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<sup>20</sup> Charles Baret to Victor, January 24, 1860.

<sup>21</sup> Abbé Gamel and Brother Jouvent to Mazenod, the end of January; D'Herbomez to Mazenod, April 21, Vincens to Gaudet, June 1; Nicolas to Mazenod, June 16, 1860; Marius Roux to Vincens, November 4, 1860; R. Cooke to Fabre, January 1, 1861, etc.

nothing but designs of mercy for your elect and that the one you have called to yourself had apparently already filled the measure of merit you required to crown him in heaven and to have him share your glory. May this dear son, this Father protect us from heaven. He leaves too great a void in the family and so we weep and, at the same time, we congratulate ourselves on the happiness he now possesses. So let us repeat the word that is capable of calming us in our just sorrow: *Fiat voluntas tua.*"<sup>22</sup>

Very few Oblates, even Father Albini, have had such a beautiful death notice, written by the Founder himself and with such intensity of feeling and admiration, so rich an exposé of merits and virtues.

In February, Bishop de Mazenod first announced that Father Aubert's duties would temporarily be fulfilled by Father Fabre (Assistant General), Vincens (Provincial of the Midi and Secretary General) and Honorat (Superior at Le Calvaire).<sup>23</sup> On February 18, he spoke to Bishop Semeria at Jaffna and Father Boisramé at Sicklinghall about the death. He wrote: "I no longer have with me the faithful interpreter of my thoughts and feelings. The good Lord has taken him from me. What a loss for the Congregation and for myself. I impose silence on myself in order to adore in all submission the impenetrable decrees of Divine Providence." "I kneel down and adore. What a loss! What a sorrow! God did not wish to give us the time to resist his overwhelming decision by prayer."<sup>24</sup>

On February 29, he announced to the President of the Council of the Propagation of the Faith "the tragic misfortune recently suffered by the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in the sudden and untimely death of that very kind Father Aubert who was responsible for all the affairs of our foreign missions. ..."<sup>25</sup> On April 17, he begged

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<sup>22</sup> *Oblate Writings* 12, pp. 224-225.

<sup>23</sup> Mazenod to the Oblates, February 12. *Oblate Writings* 12, p. 177; Register of the Council of the Midi Province, February 22, 1860.

<sup>24</sup> Mazenod to Semeria, February 18, to Boisramé, February 18, 1860. *Oblate Writings* 4, p. 149; 3, p. 155.

<sup>25</sup> Mazenod to the Propagation of the Faith, February 29, 1860. *Oblate Writings* 5, p. 301.

pardon for being late with his correspondence with Bishop Taché and Father Faraud in the Canadian Northwest: "Letters rain down on me from everywhere and, alas, I no longer have our lamented Father Aubert to help and comfort me in these inescapable labors. At the present moment I can say that I am quite alone"; "The good Lord has taken from me the one who used to help me out by undertaking a large part of my correspondence with the mission countries. This is a cruel loss from so many points of view."<sup>26</sup> On June 1 and 20, he began a letter to Father Gaudet in Texas, and one to Father Soullier at Autun, with these words: "Alas, it will no longer be by means of the admirable, the precious, the inestimable and beloved Father Aubert that you will receive the communications that I will have to send. He is in heaven!" "Matters pile up on me more than ever since the death, so painful to my spirit, of Father Aubert whom we regret constantly."<sup>27</sup>

In July, one has the impression that his grief became deeper and that he gave up hope of filling up somehow the void in his life: "How bitter death is when it takes away from us those whom we have so many reasons to regret," he wrote to Bishop Semeria. "Do you imagine for example I have accustomed myself to the thought that I have lost our Father Aubert who was so good, so kind, so admirable? I groan several times a day over this irreparable loss. The void he leaves around me is an abyss which nothing can bridge. He is a loss to my heart, he is a daily loss to the service of the Congregation, he is a loss to all those whom he edified, whom he helped, whom he encouraged and whom he carried with him by his advice and most of all by his example. ..."<sup>28</sup>

The intensity of suffering expressed in this letter leads one to think that the deep and keenly-felt wound opened in Bishop de Mazenod's heart, as well as the increased workload which followed, played a major part in the illness which caused his death in May 1861 and had already forced him into complete rest from the beginning of January.

As for Father Aubert, the highest praise rendered him which best described his virtues and role as confidant and beloved collaborator of

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<sup>26</sup> *Oblate Writings* 2, pp. 223, 236.

<sup>27</sup> *Oblate Writings* 2, p. 229 and 12, p. 191.

<sup>28</sup> *Oblate Writings* 4, p. 153.

the Founder came from a letter of Brother Jouvent: "What gentleness, what charity providing for every need! What zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls! What a life of dedication and sacrifice! In all truth, one could say and believe that, like the beloved disciple on the Divine Master's breast, he rested on your paternal heart where he drew those great virtues which seemed to make him your living image!"<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Notice nécrologiques* VI, p. 125.

## FATHER AUBERT'S WRITINGS

### A – PUBLISHED WRITINGS

- 1838: *Manuel de dévotion aux mystères douloureux de la T.S. Vierge Marie à l'usage des Congrégationistes et des Associés de N.-D. des Sept Douleurs*. Marseille, 1838, 214 pp. (published in 1851 and an abridged version in 1862, 1874 and 1916).
- 1853-1854: *Notice historique et statistique sur la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de M.I. et compte rendu de l'année 1853-1854*. 43 pp. (signed by Bishop de Mazenod and "C. Aubert, acting as Secretary General").
- 1854: *Notice sur la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de M.I.* 1854, 14 pp.
- 1854: *Etat général du personnel de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de M.I.* (personnel and necrology), 1854, 7 pp.
- 1854-1855: *Congrégation des Oblats de M.I.: Compte rendu de l'année 1854-1855*, 39 pp. (signed by Bishop de Mazenod and "Aubert, acting as Secretary General").
- 1857-1858: *Notice historique et statistique sur la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de M.I. et compte rendu de l'année 1857-1858*, 22 pp. (signed by Bishop de Mazenod and "C. Aubert, Assistant and Secretary General").\*

### B. MANUSCRIPT WRITINGS

#### 1) *Spiritual writings*

- 1827: *Journal du temps de mon noviciat*, 10 janvier - 28 juin 1827. AGR, C. Aubert file. 84 pp. (Meditation reviews)

\* N.B. According to correspondence, Fathers Joseph Fabre and Achille Rey certainly helped Father Aubert in composing and having these notices printed.

- 1827-1835: Retreat notes for 1827, 1828, 1830-1833, 1835. Cf. *Infra*, p. 135 and following.
- 1828: Conduite à suivre dans mes exercices particuliers, 1828. Cf. *Infra*, pp. 148-163.
- 1835-1836: Directoire des novices, [1835-1836], APR, DM IX 6, 34 pp. Handwritten text by Father Charles Bellon.
- 1835-1841: Notes pour un commentaire des Règles et du règlement du noviciat, AGR, C. Aubert file.
- Undated: Sermons, cf. M. Bernad, O.M.I., *Bibliographie des Missionnaires Oblats de M.I.*, Vol. 1: 1816-1915, p. 12 (Father Bernad gives titles for many French and English sermons; they are no longer in the AGR).

## 2) *Historical Writings*

- 1834: Report by the director of scholastics at Le Calvaire at Marseilles, April 20, 1834. Cf. *Infra*, p. 206.
- 1834-1844: Annals and discussions of the Council Meetings of the first house in Marseilles from 1834 to [1844]. Archives of the Midi Province, no. 23.
- 1843-1844: History of the Penzance house, 1843-1844. Cf. *Infra*, p. 217.
- 1844-1859: Minutes of the General Council, 1844-1859. AGR. Two handwritten volumes, written almost entirely by Father Aubert.
- 1845-1902: Minutes of the Council of the first house in Marseilles from 1845 to 1902. Register started by Father Aubert. Archives of the Midi Province, no. 24.
- 1849-1870: Congregation of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, established in 1826 (Father Suzanne) of Le Calvaire and deliberations of this Congregation's Council from 1849 to 1870. Register started by Father Aubert. Archives of the Midi Province, no. 30.
- 1853-1870: Annales (Codex historicus) of Le Calvaire, 1853-1870. Register started by Fathers Dassy and Aubert. Archives of the Midi Province, no. 26.
- 1853: ... Proceedings of the Council meetings of the Province of France Midi.

3) *Canonical Visitations*. Originals in the files of these houses, AGR.

*a) First French Province*

Aix: December 28-30, 1855, 4 pp.

December 28-30, 1855: Observations, 2 pp.

Ajaccio, Major Seminary:

April 12-16, 1856, 8 pp.

June 12-15, 1858, 6 pp.

June 12-15, 1858, Notes and remarks about the Fathers, 7 pp.

July 10-11, 1859, 2 pp.

Marseilles, Le Calvaire:

July 16-18, 1855, 6 pp.

June 11-13, 1857, 7 pp. (AGR Ms Hb 55)

Marseilles, Montolivet:

July 16, 1856 (letter to Father Tempier, 3 pp., see *infra* letter no. 24, p. 268).

Marseilles, Notre Dame de la Garde:

July 11-13, 1855, 5 pp.

Notre Dame de Bon Secours:

July 2, 1856, 4 pp.

Notre Dame de Lumières,

June 15-18, 1856, 4 pp.

Vico:

April 18-21, 1856, 8 pp.

April 24-26, 1857, 4 pp.

June 17-20, 1858, 12 pp.

[1859], s.d., 8 pp.

*b) Anglo-Irish Province*

Everingham

June 30-July 3, 1848, 4 pp.

Grâce-Dieu

August 24-27, 1846, 8 pp.

## Penzance

February 25, 1844, 8 pp.

August 6-12, 1846, 12 pp.

July 10-13, 1848, 4 pp.

## Province

January 10, 1850, manuscript copy in Latin, 4 pp.

August 31, 1855, manuscript copy in English, pp. 12-29.

- 4) *Reports to the Propagation of the Faith on the needs of the Oblate missions.* Manuscript copy, APR, Register of important letters 1855-1863: pp. 8, 58, 99, 101-105, 160, 173, 217, 223-231 (April 16, 1855, April 14, 1856, April 24, 1857, April 29, 1858, February 24-25 and May 6, 1859).

5) *Correspondence*

a) *Circular letters.* AGR: file: *France-Midi, circulars.*

— Financial matters: October 30 to December 30, 1854; March and May 1, 1855, February 20 and June 14, 1856, March 19, 1857, February 17, 1858, February 17, 1859.

— Death notices with a short biography. AGR, personnel files:

- 1838, Father Louis Morandini
- November 18, 1845, Father Antoine Gibelli
- June 25, 1855, scholastic brother Marie Joseph Caix
- September 8, 1857, Father Joseph Andrieux (v. *infra*, letter no. 26, p. 272)
- July 4, 1858, scholastic brother Jean-Baptiste Baland
- July 11, 1858, Father Pierre Jules Amisse.

b) *Letters to Oblates and others, as secretary general* (v. *infra* letters 1-56, pp. 223-324).



## SPIRITUAL AND HISTORICAL WRITINGS

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## RETREAT NOTES AND CONDUCT TO FOLLOW IN EXERCISES

### INTRODUCTION

*We possess notes from seven retreats made by Casimir Aubert from 1827 to 1835, as well as some resolutions taken in 1828 relative to daily exercises of piety. We are publishing them in their entirety since they not only help us to know Father Aubert better as the beloved son and, after Father Tempier, the most important collaborator of Bishop de Mazenod, but because they also allow us an insight into the spirituality and customs of the Congregation's beginnings which are still little known.*

*According to these notes, the preacher didn't seem to play an important role. Casimir spoke about them very discretely only in 1828 (Suzanne), in 1830 (Mille) and in 1833 (Honorat); he seems to indicate that the retreat director limited himself to proposing and commenting on meditation topics.*

*The essential of the retreat consisted of three meditations a day and, an important fact to underline, in all of the community retreats for novices and scholastics from 1827 to 1835, the meditation topics, it seems, all came from the work of Father François Nepveu, S.J.: Retreat for clerics according to the spirit and method of Saint Ignatius.<sup>1</sup>*

*Was it by chance or lack of communication between the various retreat directors, or rather through a previous decision that they thus*

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<sup>1</sup> *Retraite selon l'esprit et la méthode de saint Ignace pour les ecclésiastiques*, Paris, 1749, 422 p. In the house libraries of Le Calvaire and Aix (now at the Oblate General House library H 7) there were also several copies of the book by Father Bourdaloue, S.J., *Retraite spirituelle à l'usage des communautés religieuses*. Lyon (editions of 1749, 1750, 1757, 1777). The retreat lasted eight days (Father Nepveu's was ten days) with almost identical meditation themes. Father Aubert didn't follow exactly the meditation order of either of these works.

followed yearly Father Nepveu's work? We cannot say with certainty; however the last hypothesis seems most likely.<sup>2</sup>

The Founder had followed this work in his retreat of 1814, most important for the orientation of his life after the one for his ordination.<sup>3</sup> There were several motives which led him to propose, if not to impose this book for the Oblate annual retreat. The author developed two main themes concerning the last things and the virtues of Jesus Christ. Besides, the Oblates, being missionaries by vocation, used to present these "great truths" in all their missions. Knowing these developments in depth and meditating on them was not a detriment to the individual's constant need of conversion but likewise helped towards better preaching. Besides that, the goal of the Institute of the Missionaries was "to form a company of priests ... who would live together and make every effort to imitate the virtues and example of our Saviour Jesus Christ. ..." <sup>4</sup> Here once again, the long and varied presentations of Father Nepveu's work on the virtues of Jesus Christ lent themselves perfectly to Father de Mazenod's desired goal.

One could nevertheless be led to think that our retreat preachers lacked somewhat in imagination, never varying the content of the retreat, and that the students showed a good deal of virtue in apparently not contesting it. Every manner of acting always has its advantages: this one allowed them to treat the main themes of the last things, sin and mercy in greater depth and, in almost an experiential manner, to

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<sup>2</sup> This hypothesis seems most probable for the historical reasons set out in the text but also because it has a basis in the archival material. Actually, among Bishop de Mazenod's papers (APR, DM IX 9) there are two undated notes concerning annual retreats. The first, published in *Missions OMI* 1936, pp. 302-307, has the title: "Retreats for our own men." He lists the meditation themes. They are almost the same as those followed by Father Aubert from 1827-1835 and Father Albini's annual retreat at the end of October 1824, cf. *Missions OMI* 1936, pp. 307-319. However, Father Nepveu's name does not appear. The second note is entitled: "Program for the annual retreat," a four-page manuscript document. It outlines especially some details of the daily timetable and the exercises for the first day of the retreat (October 24) and the last day (November first).

<sup>3</sup> In Eugene de Mazenod's spiritual writings, the retreat notes of 1814 take up 32 pages (*Oblate Writings* 15, pp. 77-108), those of his ordination in 1811 only 15 pages.

<sup>4</sup> The first article of the Rule of 1818. Part Two, Chapter One (Paragraph 4) of the Rule of 1818, on "Other Principal Observances," likewise stated: "It has already been said that the missionaries ought, as far as the weakness of human nature allows, to imitate in everything the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, the chief founder of the Society, and that of his Apostles, our first fathers. In imitation of these great models ..."

*become more acquainted with the life of Jesus, his teaching, his mysteries so as to become, little by little, other Christs.*

*It seems that this is what happened with Casimir. In 1835 only everything became clear and he understood especially in a much deeper manner the meaning of sufferings in the life of a priest and of the passion of Jesus Christ as well as its continuation in the sacrifice of the Mass and in the Sacraments.*

*At that time Father Aubert informed the Founder of all the grace and enlightenment he had just received. The latter wrote him the affectionate letter of November 10, 1835,<sup>5</sup> in which, among other things, he replied:*

*When I hear what you say about the workings of grace in yourself, I am filled with an almost tangible joy; that is how God in his goodness deals with his children when they display goodwill! The profound impressions that your soul thus receives are not given merely for your progress in these days of fervour when the dew of heaven falls in a tangible way for your consolation and encouragement, but also for times of trial and darkness, should the Lord condemn you to them, as he sometimes does even those he loves much. Then the memory of intimate communications of grace is a sustaining force: one lives, so to speak, on these provisions.*

*Casimir often refers to Jesus Christ as Saviour in these notes. The Founder wanted that and seeing Christ in this way gradually became part of the spirituality of the Congregation.<sup>6</sup> Casimir was always touched so that he reacted and was set on fire every time he meditated on Jesus' passion in which he wished to share by humiliations, suffering and even the offering of his life as a victim of charity or zeal which he did during his first Mass.<sup>7</sup> He also meditated on the resurrection during his retreat of 1835 but the considerations did not strike him as much as*

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<sup>5</sup> *Oblate Writings* 8, p. 202.

<sup>6</sup> H. Gratton, *La Dévotion salvatorienne du Fondateur aux premières années de son sacerdoce ...* in *Etudes Oblates* 1 (1942) pp. 158-171.

<sup>7</sup> There we have a central aspect of "Oblate" or victim spirituality, clearly expressed and lived by Bishop de Mazenod, which remained alive in the Congregation's history, cf. Maurizio Giorgianni, *Martirio, carisma della missione; sua proiezione in Eugenio de Mazenod e nei missionari Oblati de M.I.*, licentiate thesis in theology, Rome, 1992.

those on the passion. Bishop de Mazenod, thanks to his sense of liturgy, succeeded rather late in balancing a victim spirituality with better comprehension of the resurrection which brings out more fully a spirituality of joy and optimism.<sup>8</sup>

Casimir Aubert was not yet at that stage but, as a good theologian, he was aware intellectually of this essential aspect of Christianity; in fact, he wrote at the end of his retreat in 1835:

*"I also understand that before living in me, Jesus Christ had to communicate his risen life to me, without which communication something of the plenitude of this divine life would be missing. I even understood that at the Holy Mass where we draw this life at its source, even though it was especially under the aspect of his abnegation and passion that Jesus Christ our Saviour honored the most holy Trinity, nevertheless the Risen Christ was also present there and we renewed the memory of this mystery that his resurrection was recalled several times. ..."*

Such as they are, these retreat notes of Father Aubert allow us to gain insight rather well into his spirituality: tending to pride and excess in studies, but convinced of the great value of religious life and the priesthood, he was always greatly animated with fervour for a continual conversion so as to better love and imitate Jesus Christ.

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<sup>8</sup> E. Lamirande, *La mort et la résurrection du Christ et leur célébration liturgique. Texte de Mgr de Mazenod*, in *Etudes Oblates* 19 (1960), pp. 3-33.

## TEXT OF SPIRITUAL WRITINGS

### 1 - Conclusion of my oblation retreat,<sup>9</sup> 1827.

*Notebook A of Casimir Aubert's retreat notes begins with this "Conclusion" of his retreat in preparation for the oblation which he made on December 25, 1827. He had made his novitiate at Marseilles under the direction of Father H. Guibert, Master of novices from 1826 to 1829.*

*It was a matter of resolutions taken in regards to the vows, charity and his devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. One resolution is surprising and does not seem to have been a general custom at the start of the Congregation: that of "receiving communion as viaticum once a month" to underline clearly the fact that he was always ready to die.*

[December 1827]

After receiving so many graces during this retreat and having the good fortune of consecrating myself totally to God by the profession of vows, it seems only natural that I should be burning with divine love. But I am still not in that state and even though I am quite well disposed, nonetheless I am not yet what God could demand of me in view of the great measure of graces with which he has filled me. How many favors have I received during my retreat! How many holy inspirations! How many interior movements of grace, and how many reproaches did God make me feel, yet without any bitterness! Seeing so many benefits what heart could be hard enough to not allow itself to be touched and to wish for nothing more than to live for its God? [p. 2] Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

[Resolutions p. 3]

Reform all my exercises, doing them with great care. Attend all exercises in common unless I am dispensed from them for good

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<sup>9</sup> Orig.: AGR, Casimir Aubert file, no. 3 A, 46 pages.

reasons. Make every communion and confession with all possible care as if I were to die each time.

Every month, one communion and confession in reparation for the others and once as viaticum on retreat day; conduct myself as if I were to die that evening.

During my monthly retreat, examine especially if I am a good religious, renew my resolutions and make others.

Every Sunday I will take some time to scrutinize how I have spent the past week and make definite plans to spend the next one better.

I will not fail to very often seek direction from the Oblate master and set out my whole lifestyle. I will very carefully observe everything that our Rules prescribe concerning the vows.

The vow of poverty. I will have a heartfelt scorn for what are called riches and regard them as rubbish. In practice, to push poverty as far as possible and neither accept nor lend even a minute object without permission. I will not become attached to anything no matter how holy the object of my attachment. I will often consider whether I have anything more than necessary in my cell [4]. I will wear the meanest clothes as much as I can; I'll be ashamed to have new ones, and esteem people who have the poorest. I will not even become attached to spiritual riches and desire that each of my brothers have the virtues that I ask of God. I will consider myself lucky if ever I have the good fortune to lack some temporal good.

The vow of chastity. I will use the principal means indicated by the saints in temptations against this virtue: flight. I will mortify my senses in every way and be as ingenious in tormenting myself as worldly people are to satisfy themselves. I will never look a woman in the face, nor men as much as possible. I will never take any purely natural satisfaction. I will always choose the worst food, renounce every kind of satisfaction and even acquire a distaste by considering O[ur] L[ord] on the cross, given gall to drink. I will not smell a flower or anything else purely for satisfaction. I will follow the advice of my superior in corporal punishments but nevertheless never forget to mortify myself in all things. [p. 5]

Vow of obedience. I will not be content to fulfill outwardly what is asked but will conform my judgment to that of my superiors. I will see



God in the one who commands. I will never consider whether what is asked is useful or not or, at least, to suppress immediately a spirit of curiosity. I will not complain in any way when I suffer from what has been commanded. I will carry out whatever desire the superiors might have that I do something. I will follow other people's opinions rather than my own unless I must do otherwise. I will interiorly consider myself a thousand times happier to obey than to command. I will scrupulously observe every one of our rules. I will quit everything as soon as God calls me through the superior's voice or the sound of the bell.

\* \* \*

I will allow myself to be guided by the law of charity not of fear. I will frequently make acts of love during the day and ask God daily to make me grow in his holy love. I will detach myself more and more from created things so as to have no thought or affection for anything but heaven or the things of God.

[p. 6] I will place my whole confidence on O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist] and grow in his holy love. I will forget nothing to acquire a lively devotion for the sacrament of the altar and the passion of O[ur] Saviour, his h[oly] infancy, his hidden life and I will especially apply myself to honor his Sacred Heart, going there to draw strength for my sufferings and temptations, unite my dispositions and affections of heart to his, that God may find them acceptable; finally, I will have affection for nothing except Jesus and learn to please him with the care of a most tender friend, carry his burden joyfully and apply myself to conforming my life to this divine model, especially in my considerations during mental prayer.

After Jesus I will place all my trust in Mary. I am obliged to serve her with the tenderness of a most devoted son since I have no other mother than her; I will have a great [p. 7] devotion for her sacred heart and through it come to that of Jesus. I will implore Mary's help in all my difficulties and temptations, and arm myself with her name as a heavenly shield, doing nothing great or small without imploring her assistance. I will celebrate her feasts with great devotion, do some small penance the night before, receive communion often in her honor, and often ask her for the grace to acquire virtues that are most dear to her, especially humility. I will seek her maternal blessing in the morning after Mass and in the evening after night prayer by reciting a few

prayers in her honor at the feet of the small statue in the entrance to our private chapel, and daily practice some virtuous act in her honor so as to make a bouquet of them to offer her on Saturday. I will recite the rosary with all possible devotion and dedicate myself to Mary by reciting the *Sub tuum*, etc. at the end; I will defend all Mary's rights and privileges, especially the Immaculate Conception, under which title she is the mother of our Society. [p. 8] Finally, I will gaze on her till my last breath and honor her as my hope, my refuge, my consolation, my life, my joy, my peace, my protectress, my patron, my advocate, my guardian, my queen and mother, and place the care of my eternal salvation in her hands. I can no longer doubt that she would refuse me the least possible favor in spite of my unworthiness since she has obtained for me the inestimable grace of my conversion and vocation.

I will also increase my devotion to the holy angels, especially the holy guardian angels, my patron saints, especially Saint Joseph and many other men and women saints for whom I have a special devotion. I will undertake nothing, no matter of how great or little importance, without having asked their help for myself.

Humility. Since we should gather all our force against our dominant passion and since I can scarcely doubt that for me it is pride, I will use every means within me to combat this passion and in so far as I find one to be efficacious, I will not hesitate to embrace it, no matter what sacrifices it may cost me. [p. 9] In that way, I will apply myself to acquiring humility in its various degrees, through humble self-knowledge, by despising esteem by others and by reflecting on the examples given us by O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist].

I will often ask God in my prayers for humility. I will combat the demon of pride, at times by a humble heartfelt turning to God, at times by despising temptations. I will often reflect on my misery, and be pleased to see this nothingness in myself, despise myself as the least of all, and be happy when I am treated as such. I will say nothing that could flatter myself, accept praise from others as if they were offenses, especially when they are not merited; I will not change the topic when people discuss things that cause me discomfort. I will love to be hidden and seen only by God, and arm myself with holy self-contempt, and consider myself as unworthy [p. 10] of the attention of others. When I see an act of humility, I will offer it to God and long for the happiness of the one who is humiliated or humbles himself.

Since there are not always occasions to humble myself, and since self-love often blinds me to them so as often not to notice them, I will imagine myself in humiliating circumstances and actually will to accept them if they come to pass.

I will mortify my own mind and will, never with the least pretension hang on to an opinion that I might have formed unless I must do otherwise. I will at least gain some humility from exercises that I may not have done faithfully enough, considering if the favours that I believe to have received from God make me more humble, and only recognize them as such if they have that attribute. I will be attentive to see God alone as being responsible for the little good that he may do in me through his grace. In all that I do, I will not rely on my often-imaginary strength, but only on God's help.

## 2 - Annual retreat in 1828.<sup>10</sup>

*A summary of the impressions experienced during the three daily meditations, following the work of Father François Nepveu, S.J.: Retreat for clerics according to the spirit and method of Saint Ignatius, or the one of Father Bourdaloue, S.J.*

Beata solitudo, sola beatitudo [p. 11].

October 23, Eve of the retreat.

Since the afternoon recreation, I have only been taken up with things that concern the retreat, so have put away all my books and study notebooks and other matters not related to spirituality. I have only kept several books and writings that may be able to stir up my fervour, thus I have disposed all the exterior of my retreat. After evening prayer I threw myself at the feet of O[ur] L[ord] and begged him to help me during my retreat; there I considered the importance and necessity of renewing myself in the service of God. I also stopped before the Blessed Virgin and prayed to her so that she not forget the need that I will have of assistance. I felt guilty of not usefully spending the time after that till we went down to the church. It is true that since I am always waiting, I could not count on even one moment. I did feel somewhat inspired during the singing of the *Veni Creator*. The good dispositions that God placed in my heart [p. 12] were strengthened even more by what o[ur]

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<sup>10</sup> Orig.: AGR, Casimir Aubert file, no. 3 A, 46 pages.

Reverend Father Superior said to us.<sup>11</sup> Every word from his lips was like a ray that enlightened and touched me at the same time. In spite of what he said to us about not relying on ourselves and the need for a retreat, I don't think that I was sufficiently convinced.

First day, [October 24].

First medit[ation] on the need for and the dispositions for a retreat. Retreats have always been customary in the Church and it has always been a saying among spiritual masters that a retreat is indispensable for one to pass from sin to grace or from a state of lukewarmness to a more fervent state. Since I am now blinded to my imperfections, I don't believe it to be all that necessary and think that it would be much more fitting for those who are plunged into the abyss of sin, but there is also for religious an abyss from which it is difficult to get out and when I have been illumined by heaven and make salutary reflections on myself, I will see to what point I am ensconced in it. But I must be persuaded that of myself I can do nothing and that only God by his grace can withdraw me from this state of lethargy. I must not take a specific virtue as the purpose of my retreat, but I must be disposed to do whatever God asks of me. I must also have the firm resolve not to sadden the Holy Spirit in any way and [p. 13] to keep watch on my heart to avoid the least infidelity. The nine o'clock discourse touched me and what was said strengthened my resolution to make every effort to profit from the retreat.

2nd meditation on the end of man.

I have received creation as an outstanding favor from God and especially that I have been created a man. Every being has a purpose and fulfills it in the Creator's plan. Only man could not fulfill it! He has been created for God alone, whatever is not God cannot satisfy him and is not worthy of him. Every being is created for Him. But man is created only to serve, love and possess God. What a noble goal. Have I always directed myself to it? Alas! I have taken the very opposite way than the one to lead me there. How ashamed I am: would that from now on I tend to it with all my strength.

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<sup>11</sup> At that time Brother Aubert was a scholastic, residing at Le Calvaire at Marseilles, where Father Marius Suzanne was superior. No doubt he preached the retreat.

3rd meditation on the goal of a religious.

I was nearly occupied the whole time with the grandeur of this state and have rendered thanks to God for the grace of having been called to it. I came out very touched and went down to Benediction [p. 14] filled with good sentiments. While singing the *Miserere* I was taken with an impression that I can't express well except by saying that it has taken hold of my whole soul and appeared in a completely new light.

Second day [October 25].

1st meditation on mortal sin.

I was deeply penetrated by all the considerations that are ordinarily given on this topic and I conceived the greatest horror for sin. I felt the same feelings of horror for venial sin during the meditation on that subject. The two-o'clock conference greatly edified me. One cannot but be touched by what happened there. I felt some repugnance at the beginning of the meditation on hell, but went ahead anyway. I was seized by a lively sense of terror all the while; this feeling stayed with me all during benediction. I can scarcely focus on everything that went on in my soul [p. 15] during those meditations, but I was struck in an extraordinary manner and the result has been that from now on no humiliation of any kind or penance could seem to balance my faults since I have committed so many and I ought to see myself as escaping hell through the mercy of God. I was inspired to love God with a love that could in some way make up for my past rebellions.

Third day, [October 26].

The meditation on death impressed me deeply, but I was inclined to drowsiness and also felt some difficulty during the one we had on the particular judgment even though I was very much struck by it. I nourished myself with these impressions for the remainder of the day and worked at preparing my confession. The evening meditation on the prodigal son touched me to a great extent but with a warmer feeling than that left in by the other meditations and the conclusion [p. 16] of the meditations that I had made up to that point was a greater horror of sin and a desire to return to God so as to give myself entirely to him.

Fourth day, [October 27].

The three meditations we made today on O[ur] L[ord], considered as our leader, 2nd as our model in his sentiments and affections, 3rd in

his humiliation in the Incarnation touched me a great deal but especially was I struck by the last one. The 9 o'clock instruction also made a deep impression on me. Since I have been preparing my confession today during free moments, I will not expand on what I have experienced. At the end of the day, I felt even more inclined to profit well from the retreat.

Fifth day, [October 28].

The matter of our first three meditations was too beautiful not to have impressed me. The first, on O[ur] L[ord's] birth struck me very much when o[ur] dear F[ather] gave it to us last evening. I followed O[ur] L[ord] into [p. 17] the poor stable where he was born, and seeing his great poverty I could not resist conceiving a greater esteem for that virtue and wanting to practice it with utmost perfection. I was also moved by the other meditations on his flight into Egypt and hidden life but I also felt a great withdrawal of grace as well as a lot of aridity and experienced difficulties. I was once again impressed in the evening with the meditation on the finding of Jesus in the temple. I did it with greater ease and I can say that today I easily focused on the meditations that I did and had almost the same impressions all day long.

Sixth day, [October 29].

Today's meditations once again developed the good dispositions that grace had placed in my heart. The one on the two standards strengthened in me the choice I had made to cling only to O[ur] L[ord]. the one at 11 o'clock gave me the determination to resolutely take all the means suitable to lead me to perfection [p. 18], and the one at 6 o'clock which especially struck me more than the others disposed me to avoid not only mortal and venial sins but to always prefer whatever would render me more comfortable to O[ur] L[ord], even though I could go to God by other roads. These meditations and especially the last one energized me to a great extent and I feel deeply rooted in the resolution that God had me take to continuously strive for the perfection of my state in life.

Seventh day, [October 30].

Possibly today's meditations made a deeper impression on me than any of the others I have made so far. It seemed to me that I perceived in a more experiential manner the great humiliations and suffering of our dear Jesus. The first one where we considered only his disgrace gave me

great esteem for humiliations and I even felt that grace moved me to desire them. I was so touched that I couldn't follow O[ur] L[ord] any further than Caiphas' house and at the time was surprised [p. 19] to be there. When our dear Father was giving the second on the flagellation and crowning of thorns, I was so moved that my heart felt numb and during the whole meditation I was overcome by a striking impression that I wouldn't be able to describe. The one that we made on O[ur] L[ord's] crucifixion also struck me, to say the least; I felt enflamed with love for O[ur] L[ord] and filled with a desire to compensate him in the future by my love for the sufferings he endured for my sins. I ruminated on these thoughts this whole day which undoubtedly has made the deepest impression on me.

Eighth day, [October 31].

This day did not impress me in the same way as the preceding ones in the three meditations that I made, one of which was very dry. I especially applied myself to becoming much stronger in my good dispositions and resolutions. The remainder of the time I used to further fortify my [p. 20] resolutions, to confess and help decorate the chapel.

Now I will say a word about the causes which greatly influenced my most habitual faults and even to some extent what I found to rather considerably reproach myself, first of all starting with oraison which should never be left to the last. I observed that I have many things for which to reproach myself and not the least of these is negligence in this holy exercise. Most often I have been tempted to drowsiness but sometimes in a very subtle way, so it seems.<sup>12</sup>

[p. 22] After receiving so many graces from God during this retreat, it is only just that I respond to them and after he has deigned to show me what has been the greatest obstacle to my perfection up to now and what I must do in the future to accomplish it, I would abuse a great grace if I were to reject the light. Thus, it is in order to respond to the favours that God has given me that I take the following resolutions; some will be for my general conduct and others for my conduct in my various particular exercises. I renew and take, first of all, the resolutions that I noted at the beginning of this little notebook [see *supra*, retreat of 1827].

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<sup>12</sup> The text stops like that, the same as does that of the following paragraph.

1 - For my general conduct. Being committed to the religious state through God's grace, I must tend with all my strength to the perfection of my state. I must not put limits to my life and say to myself that I will only go to such a point; I must have the disposition to follow God wherever he will call me through his grace. Thus I must not [p. 23] be content with ordinary perfection but must constantly aspire to a higher level and now work at ...

### 3 - [Conduct to follow in my various individual exercises, 1828].<sup>13</sup>

*This writing seems very personal and interesting; we can, in fact, follow the young Oblate in the various exercises of piety then in use on a daily basis; they scarcely changed for more than a century.*

*This text is without title or date, but Casimir Aubert mentioned it at the end of his retreat notes of 1828 and referred to it by the title that we give here.*

*Casimir points out on the first page of this notebook the plan that he intends to follow:*

— chapter 1: daily exercises. *This is the only one he develops, beginning on page nine.*

— chapter 2: weekly exercises (direction, confession, communions, etc.).

— chapter 3: monthly exercises (monthly retreat).

— chapter 4: things to be always observed.

*The same plan is on the first page of the Directory for novices which, according to tradition, was composed by Casimir Aubert. We still have a hand-written text, seemingly copied by Father Charles Bellon around 1835 or 1836 (APR DM IX 6, 34 pp.).*

*In the some fifteen themes developed, only three are common to the two writings: oraison, divine office, and meals.*

*That Father Aubert wrote the Directory seems to be confirmed here by several sentences about oraison which seem almost identical.*

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<sup>13</sup> Orig.: AGR, Casimir Aubert file, no. 3, B, 31 pages.



Conduct to follow in my  
exercises

*(Written personally by Casimir and known only to him)*

[p. 11] ... Whatever topic that I intend to meditate on, first of all I will take refuge in the heart of Jesus to contemplate there the virtue or also the mystery which is to be the subject of my oraison.

Then I will gently lend myself to the reflections proper to my meditation material and I will follow rather closely the ordinary method without however constraining myself meticulously to all the prescribed acts. I will always start with some considerations and as soon as I sense some affection rising in my heart, I will allow myself to follow them without stifling God's spirit. If they are only passing sentiments, I will once more go back to reflecting until I feel my heart moving to new affection.

However it is good to note that I must especially aim at affective, contemplative prayer to which God's grace attracts me which is much more beneficial for my advancement ...

Directory for novices

[p. 34]

... In general, novices will take care to maintain great freedom in their oraison. As soon as they notice some good sentiment arising, they will allow themselves to follow it without stifling God's spirit. If it is only a passing sentiment, they will come back to some consideration until their heart opens to some new affection. It is good to note that they will especially aim for an affectionate and meditative oraison which is undoubtedly the best in which they merit to be lifted up by perfect cooperation with grace.

### Conduct to follow in my exercises

*I will also greatly apply myself to much prayer during meditation and, in order that this exercise become beneficial, towards the end I will always reflect on myself to examine how I have lived up to this virtue, etc. on which I am meditating and to take resolutions relating to it or the one I am using for particular examen ...*

*[p. 12] At the same time I will take care to make a spiritual bouquet and, if the entire time of oraison has run out before I have made these last acts that I have just decided upon, I will not fail to take time after to make up for it.*

*If it happens that I experience aridity and distractions, I will more carefully watch myself, however rejecting any spirit of constraint or tension. In this state I will remain humbly before God, from time to time addressing him with sighs and expressions of love! I will always keep this rule in mind that, however I have made my oraison, I will always leave it more humble and filled with ardor for the Lord's service.*

### Directory for novices

*They will apply themselves to much prayer during oraison and always make some personal reflection on themselves as well as making some resolutions.*

*If the end of the hour surprises them before having made the last acts prescribed for oraison, they will take some time after to make up for it.*

*If they experience aridity and distractions in this exercise, they will more carefully watch themselves, very gently repulsing distracting thoughts and impressions of boredom or sadness, but avoiding also any spirit of constraint or tension; they will then remain humble before God and will from time to time address him with sighs and expressions of love. They ought to follow the rule that, no matter how they have made oraison, they should always end up more humble and filled with ardor for God's service.*

L.J.C. et M.I. J.M.J.

Daily activities. [p. 9]

### *Rising*

From my first waking moment, my main concern will be to raise my mind and heart to God, piously pronounce the sweet names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and fortify myself with the sign of the cross that I will make after taking holy water. If the rising bell sounds then, I will respond immediately as if it were the voice of God, no matter how painful it seems to me in winter. I will take my soutane right away, respectfully kiss it and modestly put it on, saying these words: *Dominus pars*, etc., continuing it joyfully: *funes ceciderunt* (Ps. XV, 5,6), considering how fortunate I am to belong so closely to my God. After I am decently dressed, I will prostrate myself on the floor and kiss it three times in honor of the most holy Trinity whom I will thus adore, wishing to annihilate myself, s[o] to s[ay], in his presence. Then I will unite myself to O[ur] L[ord] and through him will render my homage of adoration, thanksgiving, oblation, and love to the h[o]lly Trinity. I will renew my vows, make a spiritual communion, and also form the intention of gaining all the indulgences I can today, ending by placing myself under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, my good guardian angel and all the other bles[sed] spirits, my h[o]lly patron saints, all the saints, especially the one that the Church honors that day in a special manner. I will do all these acts kneeling down without extending them too long but keeping them succinct and to the point.

After I get up, I will, as I finish dressing, recall to mind the virtue I had chosen as subect of my particular examen to which I must relate all my conduct. I will also glance at things to be done so as to prepare myself in advance for whatever will help me to carry them out well. Then I will review the diffe[ren]t [p. 10] reflections to be the subject of my oraison so as not to get there without knowing what I should consider.

Before going down to the hall where this exercise takes place, I will leave my room early enough so as to have a few minutes before it to spend before o[ur] L[ord] J[esus]-C[hrist]. Before entering the chapel, I will arouse in myself a lively desire to present myself before o[ur] L[ord] whom I have not seen for almost a space of eight hours. As soon

as I enter, I will kneel in his presence and kiss the floor. I will then beg him to allow me to unite myself to him in all my thoughts, words and actions of this day and of my whole life; I will implore him to favor me with the grace to make this holy union with his divine person intimate and I will take care to make a spiritual communion at the end. I will also take care, on getting up, to banish any thoughts of sadness and encourage joyful feelings at the sight of a new day given to me to serve God and love the adorable, dear Jesus my Saviour.

### *Oraison*

After that I will go to the hall for the exercise with simultaneous sentiments of joy and humility and I will try to be penetrated with holy respect and recollection, considering the sublime activity that I am to accomplish. In vocal prayer I will attempt to enter into the beautiful sentiments expressed therein to the adorable Trinity and, to avoid distractions, I will try to follow in a very low voice the words pronounced by the one leading the prayer. As soon as I start mental prayer, I will be carefully attentive to the preliminary acts but especially, before entering into the subject, I will deeply humble myself before God, recognizing my insufficiency and begging him insistently for the grace to make a good meditation. A human being [p. 11] can do nothing of himself in this matter and will succeed according to the degree that he distrusts his weakness and throws himself into the Lord's arms. Whatever topic that I intend to meditate on, I will first of all take refuge in the heart of Jesus to contemplate therein the virtue or rather the mystery which should be the subject of my oraison. Then I will gently lend myself to the reflections proper to my meditation material and I will follow rather closely the ordinary method without however constraining myself meticulously to all the prescribed acts. I will always start with some considerations and as soon as I sense some affection rising in my heart, I will allow myself to follow them without stifling God's spirit. If they are only passing sentiments, I will once more return to some reflection until I feel my heart opening to new affection. However, it is good to note that I must especially keep to affective, contemplative oraison to which God's grace attracts me which is much more beneficial for my advancement than the method of considerations which is to be put into practice only to arouse affection and should be discontinued as soon as the goal is achieved. I will also greatly apply myself to much prayer during meditation and, in order that this exercise become more beneficial,

towards the end I will always reflect on myself to examine how I have lived up to this virtue, etc. on which I am meditating and to take resolutions relating to it or the one I am using for my particular examen or according to my present needs, but in all this, never [p. 12] in too general a manner which would render them almost useless.

At the same time I will take care to make a spiritual bouquet and, if the entire time of oraison has run out before I have made these last acts that I just decided upon, I will not fail to take time after to make up for it.

If it happens that I experience aridity and distractions in the exercise of oraison, I will more carefully watch over myself, however rejecting any spirit of constraint or tension. In this state I will remain humbly before God, from time to time addressing myself to him with sighs and expressions of love. I will always keep this rule in mind that, no matter how I have made my oraison, I should always leave it more humble and filled with ardor for the Lord's service. Ordinarily, it will be good to make 2 meditations on the passion of O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist], on Wednesdays and Fridays. During Lent I can make it habitually in the morning on this matter, that's when especially I will stop any considerations to give myself over to affection that the sight of the sufferings and humiliations of O[ur] good Saviour should arouse in the heart of a true religious. On Saturdays my oraison subject will be some virtue or mystery relating to the b[lessed] Virgin Mary, my dear Mother. On Sundays I will usually take the subject of the gospel for the day, on Thursdays I will make my meditation on the Most Holy Sacrament [p. 13], which will help me to maintain my love of the divine Saviour and at the same time to keep me in an habitual fervor for h[oly] Communion. It will be useful for me, at least for some time, to take one day a week for oraison on all the reasons I have for being humble. This meditation will, I hope, contribute considerably in maintaining the dispositions I should have about myself and simultaneously move me to assiduous practice of the beautiful virtue of humility. On the other weekdays, the subject of my oraison will be some virtue related to my present needs or the feast of some saint which may come up, etc.

When I finish the exercise of oraison, I will place everything under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, *Sub tuum*, etc. and recite with a deep spirit of faith the beautiful prayer: *O Jesu vivens in Maria*, etc. I will make an effort to renew my fervor saying the *Angelus* and espe-

cially arouse myself to a great spirit of religion at the words: *Verbum caro factum est*. This prayer, the *Angelus*, while reminding me of my obligations to Mary will also very aptly arouse in me true sentiments of humility.

After leaving the hall of the exercise I will go to the chapel, keeping myself in a deep spirit of recollection and will always spend a few minutes in reviewing my oraison to see the defects that slipped in and at the same time look for ways to prevent them from now on. During the three verses of the *Angelus*, I can habitually renew my vows [p. 14].

### *Holy Mass*

If a religious should put so much effort and fervor into oraison, what sentiments then should he have when he has the good fortune to participate in the h[oly] sacrifice of the Mass. O my God! What feelings should I have in my heart when I come to the peak of a new Calvary to contemplate the excess of your love and the most beautiful testimony of your tenderness! How evident should be my nothingness at the sight of the great Lord of heaven and earth in that state of lowliness and immolation! Oh! let my heart burst into flame when I come to the foot of the altar where the sacrifice of love is to take place and let me enter into lively sentiments of faith and devotion which should inspire every true lover of O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist].

When I don't have the good fortune to receive H[oly] Communion, I will attend H[oly] Mass, following the priest's movements, saying the words of the H[oly] Sacrifice with him. I will try to appreciate the admirable meaning of these words and enter into all the sentiments expressed in them. I will then also think of the happiness I will one day have of myself offering the awesome sacrifice and this thought should arouse in me great sentiments of love and fervor, keeping me in a continual spirit of faith. Sometimes, I will be able to follow another method, following the lead of grace, but I will always take care to pray a great deal during h[oly] Mass, especially when the adorable victim is present on the altar. What then could we not expect from the prayers which, being united to those of our divine mediator, are so efficacious before the sovereign majesty of God. I will also then rededicate [p. 15] myself to our loveable Saviour, beseeching him for the graces I know that I need. I will not forget to remind him of all the needs of people who are dear to me. Whenever I am fortunate enough to take part in the feast of

the immaculate Lamb, I will then usually begin by praying and becoming aware of the great blessing God has granted me in allowing me to share in holy Mass and to receive Communion. I will remind myself how unworthy I am to be present at holy Mass, and even more to be able to receive h[oly] Communion; I will also make a spiritual Communion at that time and imagine myself being taken into heaven where, in the presence of the whole heavenly court, I will take part in the sacrifice of the h[ol]y victim. These acts will bring me almost to the Gospel. From then on to the elevation I will reflect on the thought of some moment in the passion so as to inspire myself even more to a greater love for the person of the loveable Jesus considering how much he wanted to suffer in order to gain the precious favour for me to be fed with his sacred flesh. A little before the elevation, I will start to prepare for holy Communion. [p. 16]

### *Divine Office*

I find among the greatest advantages of our Congregation reciting the Divine Office in common to be one of the most precious. Thus I will apply myself to performing this holy exercise with all the fervor and attention that it demands. As soon as the bell summons me, I will bring to mind some pious thought on my way there, considering myself a thousand times blessed to be able to start here on earth this singing of the Lord's praises which I will be able to continue in heaven for all eternity. At the start I will imagine the concert of praise which can be heard night and day in heaven to honor the adorable Trinity and the Lamb who has redeemed the world. I will join in these praises and seek to be penetrated with sentiments of faith and love which should animate all the blessed inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem. At the same time I will share in the prayers which the Church militant raises to heaven and be happy to be able to add my voice to that of so many holy souls who recite the divine office as I do. I will assiduously enter into O[ur] L[ord]'s sentiments, himself praying ceaselessly to his Father for mankind. Through him I will offer my homage and praise to the Lord and to inspire myself from time to time I will glance at and place my heart in the holy tabernacle where he resides. During this whole exercise I will maintain a religious attitude, seeing myself as commissioned by our Society and the Church to bring the Lord's grace on all my brothers and on all Christianity, and at the same time charged with rendering him [p. 17] this tribute of love in compensation for the many outrages

he receives on the part of his children and finally to calm the anger justly enflamed against those culpable.

To avoid distractions, before the office I will focus on some of the sentiments I have just expressed, and very devoutly recite the little opening prayer: *Aperi Domine*, or *Domine Jesu Christe*, etc. During the whole exercise I will maintain a truly religious modesty and keep watch especially over my eyes. As for the manner of reciting it, I will ordinarily enter as much as possible into the attitude of the royal prophet, humbling myself, rousing myself to love of God's law, making supplication with him according to the varied affections that I notice in the psalms. During major religious feasts, I will be able to inspire myself with thoughts taken from them in order to fervently recite the d[ivi]ne office. If I am able to truly keep up a spirit of faith and love, I will certainly not lack means of avoiding distractions. However, as I well recognize my weakness in that respect, when I notice that I am distracted, I will very gently bring my mind back to itself without force and with a loving glance at o[ur] L[ord], I will ask his pardon for that offence since in my case it is often voluntary (in the cause). Thus, far from me be the thought of considering the recitation of divine office as a painful duty and an exercise of constraint in which I must keep my mind occupied for some time with a certain anxiety — no, that would certainly not be the true spirit of love. God is not [p. 18] at all a tyrant, he asks for the heart and holy joy should always animate those who serve him. Thus, I will regard the obligation that I have undertaken to recite the divine office as one of the lightest burdens of my life, one of the most agreeable exercises for a truly loving heart and as a holy relaxation through which, after having been occupied with other less-pious works, I come to rest from time to time in the heart of our Lord and draw new strength from meditation on his holy law. Let us fervently enter into Saint Cecilia's attitude: *fiat cor meum immaculatum*, etc., *famula tua, Domine, sicut apis argumentosa tibi deservit*, etc.

At the end of each psalm and at the Gloria Patri I will renew my attention and fervor and at the end of each hour I will concentrate on saying the prayer *Sacrosanctae et individuae Trinitati*, etc. with great piety.

When it happens that I have to say this office in private, I will avoid rushing and pronounce the words distinctly, trying to savour them and nourish myself with the great lessons they contain.



During matins I will recite the first nocturn for the needs of those belonging to the Church. I will say the second for worldly people, infidels, etc. and the third I will pray for religious Orders, especially our Society. Lauds will be said for the souls in purgatory. In the other hours I will usually have the intention of the Church or the Society or the one I have in all my other prayers. [19]

*[Examinations of conscience]*

I will more or less follow the method taught by masters of the spiritual life in both my particular and general examinations of conscience, but I will especially pay attention not to be too occupied with looking for my faults and neglecting in that way other matters which may be just as important.

For particular examen, after having glanced at the failures I may have committed against the special virtue that I am trying to acquire, I will principally focus on making good resolutions to avoid the same faults and always practice greater fidelity in that virtue I had intended to work on; I will ask God insistantly for that grace, throwing myself with great confidence and love into the care of the Blessed Virgin, saying the prayer *O Domina mea*, etc. Thus I will prepare very attentatively to recite the litanies which follow and be absorbed in the beauifful sentiments they express. I will carefully avoid the illusion into which I have often fallen when I was distracted during the examen, to think about it during the litanies which gave me new distractions. From now on, even though I may have been distracted during the examen, I will always pay close attention to the litanies and after that to make up for the examen. [p. 20]

In regard to the general examination, I will begin it by renewing in myself the spirit of faith and love. I will imagine myself as having come to render an account of my day to O[ur] L[ord] J[esis] C[hrist] himself. After glancing at the graces God has given me for the day and humbly thanking him for them, I will begin to examine my faults in thought, word and action, etc.; after an adequate examination, I will humble myself before the Lord and seek at the same time for means to refrain from falling into the negligences I have noticed and form a firm resolution not to permit myself to commit them again, asking God with insistence for the grace to be faithful; with these sentiments I will recite the act of contrition taking refuge at the foot of O[ur] L[ord's] cross, so as

to form true sorrow and a sincere resolution to do better. If I have been distracted during the time given to the general examination, I will not fail to make up for it after the prayer as well as going studiously to accuse myself to the superior after this exercise. I am convinced that this act is very apt to draw heavenly favors on my soul, besides being a source of consolation for myself and an efficacious means to correct my numerous defects.

*Visits to the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin [p. 21]*

Another exercise no less precious and even more consoling for a truly loving heart is the visit to the Blessed Sacrament. Oh! If O[ur] L[ord] would deserve, for the great gift of living among us here on earth, to have Christians continually offering him their homage at the foot of the altar, how much greater right has he to ask it of a religious whom he showers with such special favors and truly lives in the same house which this dear Saviour deigns to favor with his real presence. Oh! It undoubtedly pertains to religious, in a century so perverse as ours, to make up to our kind Saviour for the outrages he receives from Christians by boundless devotion and love for his divine person. So, I will strive with all my might to fulfill such a consoling duty for one who burns with so much, even if it is only a little, love for his God. I will consider time spent in this exercise as sweet rest for my heart, relaxation after often arid occupations in which I have just been involved. I will renew my spirit of faith and fervor before the holy altar and there, in union with the holy angels, I will render to the adorable Jesus my homage of adoration, thanksgiving, love, etc. asking him for graces and favors by simply baring to him my needs and those of people dear to me. I will spend about a quarter of an hour in this exercise [p. 22]. At the same time, I will take care to visit my dear mother, the Blessed Virgin to honor her as well and to request her powerful protection. I must never separate Mary from Jesus in my heart, and after the Son place all my confidence and love in the Mother. But this visit to O[ur] L[ord] must not suffice for my love and, before and after class, I will take care to spend a few minutes in his holy presence and generally follow the rule of scarcely passing an hour or an hour and a half without a short visit, inspired totally by love.

*Evening oraison*

I must also say a word about the evening oraison before the Blessed Sacrament. This exercise has been instituted in our Society principally

that we communicate with and grow in our knowledge, esteem and love for O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist]. It is especially in this oraison that I must follow my heart in its affection and sweet repose of soul in savoring the mysteries relating to the divine person of O[ur] L[ord]. For this purpose I will usually choose a meditation topic from a mystery, an event from the life or a few words of our very dear Saviour. As soon as I have entered the chapel, I will be absorbed in profound sentiments of [p. 23] respect and faith and after I have greeted O[ur] L[ord], I will begin my oraison, abandoning my soul to some reflections of my meditation subject or some affection following the inspiration of grace, but I will be very attentive to pray a great deal during this exercise. Oh! what moment could be me propitious for that! Could O[ur] L[ord] refuse something to a soul which wishes to sincerely love him and thus beg some grace from him?

At the end of oraison I will leave O[ur] divine Saviour's presence with regret, renewing my faith and love. If I experience dryness, coldness or distractions during this exercise, I will very gently and humbly sorrow over my state, uniting myself to the homage rendered him at this time by the angels surrounding the holy tabernacle, to all the holy souls who are praying to him and especially to all my brothers with me in this holy place and I will beg him to receive this homage as compensation for my coldness and insensitivity. [p. 24]

### *Spiritual reading*

To maintain my fervor and always fulfill my duties as a religious faithfully, I will make use of another very powerful means of doing so, spiritual reading. In this exercise I will carefully avoid seeing it as an instruction, but rather something for my own edification, so I will in no way seek to follow my own taste in the choice of book to furnish the topic of my reading, but I will envisage only what could be useful to my spiritual advancement. Generally speaking, I will not allow myself to make the choice but will leave it to my superior so as to have another merit, obedience, and God himself will arrange it that the work that is given me will profit me more than another that I might have chosen myself as more adapted to my needs. After imploring light from the Holy Spirit, I will begin this exercise of spiritual reading with a chapter from our holy Rules which, out of respect, I will read standing up with my head bare. In this way I will foster knowledge and love of my duties

and continually grow in my esteem for these observances which must be the dear object of my fidelity and which comprise the total perfection to which I can aspire. After that I will read the book [p. 25] given me for spiritual reading and during this exercise I will certainly avoid a fault very often found especially among young people. I will take great care not to hurry my reading in a desire to cover a lot of material and so to say devour my book in short order. But as soon as something strikes me I will stop and take time for reflection in order to more deeply imprint on my mind what has touched me so as to savour it thereafter in leisure and I will generally read rather slowly to give my mind time to reflect and retain whatever struck it.

### *Holy Scripture*

I will read holy scripture with the same care and even much more respect. I will always stand up with my head uncovered for this exercise. As long as I may never have more time than now, I will search for nothing but a topic of edification in holy scripture, without forgetting however to acquire a certain degree of acquaintance and knowledge in it which is indispensable for someone set aside for the service of souls. But I must not be content with this rather meagre knowledge and as soon as time allows I will make a serious study of this so essential aspect of ecclesiastical science by applying myself to studying each part extensively and in detail, making use of the best commentaries and especially having great recourse to prayer.

I will do this reading as if God were talking to me through the sacred author and as if I were reading a letter that the Lord had sent me from heaven, my true native land. [26]

### *Studies*

Truly spiritual people have always considered study to be an exercise filled with danger to piety and it wasn't in vain that the great Saint Paul said that knowledge puffs up. There is no advantage that our vanity seeks more in which to glory than in intellectual matters generally held in high esteem by pious people. Even if I had not learnt of these dangers in study from authors who treated of it, my own experience would have sufficed to teach me about it. Ever since I have been fortunate enough to be dedicated totally to God I have probably not experienced any greater difficulty than that of properly balancing piety and

study. This difficulty is that much greater in myself since I am naturally filled with pride, consequently always wanting to stand out by any means whatever. I have to do violence to myself so as not to succumb to a veritable passion for knowledge. My misuse of study up to now has been most detrimental to the way of perfection. If I have made so little progress in the interior life, so little given to recollection and my meditations are so imperfect, hasn't it been study which has been the cause [in] great part, filling my mind with distracting thoughts and deluding me in such a way that I neglect my religious duties to focus only on learning. Should I then renounce study? Certainly not. It would be a dangerous illusion that would attempt to convince me to make such a choice [p. 27]. No, but I must regulate this exercise very carefully so that it serves like all the others to lead me to God and work for his glory. In my studies, I must be animated by great thoughts of faith and devotion to the cause of truth. My entire intention during study which I undertake must be to form myself into a fitting instrument in God's hands to serve his glory, a faithful minister of the Church, ready to defend her rights and interests, and, finally, to become a worthy son of our Society, apt to fulfill its purpose to work for the salvation of souls and spread the holy religion of J[esus] C[hrist] everywhere. May all the unworthy thoughts of self-love and recurrences of vanity disappear before these great considerations and motives, the only ones worthy of attracting the attention of a fervent religious. In my studies, I will often stimulate myself with thoughts as these, so that this exercise may be just as beneficial as the others for my spiritual advancement. But I must outline in greater detail the manner of fulfilling this exercise. First of all, I will not undertake any study that has not been assigned by obedience. Then, assured of following God's will, I will study solely to carry out that holy will and not follow my own taste. If I [p. 28] am to choose some matter for study in which my superiors leave me free or ask me to suggest to them, I will be very careful not to follow my own special viewpoint often dictated by self-love, rather I will then choose some topics that should come first, such as holy Scripture, theology, or apostolic eloquence. No matter how diverse these studies may be, I will always attempt to keep strict order, giving each its allotted time, applying myself to them more or less according to their importance, always with obedience in mind. Before beginning any topic whatever, I will beg light from the Holy Spirit by reciting the *Veni Sancte*, etc., praying the *Ave Maria* to the Blessed Virgin, imploring help from the divine Word, uniting myself to O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist] working in Saint

Joseph's shop, expressing some ejaculatory prayer taken from the morning's meditation and beginning with the purest intention. During study time, I will renew my intention from time to time, fixing my regard on the crucifix or an image of the Blessed Virgin so as to lift my mind to God and heavenly things. When the topic of study inspires me with some good thought, I will follow it and savor it for some time. I will avoid wasting time as has often happened to me, flipping through other books than the one I am studying or reading out of curiosity some pages taken from my books without any order or usefulness. After study I will lift my heart to God to thank him [p. 29] for all the graces he granted me during this exercise and beg him especially that what I have been able to learn not be a subject of distraction during my exercises of piety. I will end by placing everything under the Blessed Virgin's protection. When I am attending class or receiving lessons from someone, I will try not to allow myself to be [too excessively] attentive so as [not] to seize moments from time to time to lift my thoughts to God and join myself to him with expressions of love. However, I will be very cautious not to lose anything that has been explained to me. To do that I will ordinarily write it out even though I would experience some repugnance in doing so. Generally, I must follow the principle of not writing too much, however, since composing is very useful as well to engrave things more deeply in one's mind, I will take care even besides my summaries to note as well whatever strikes me in my reading or in sermons I hear, etc.

Finally, I must apply myself mainly to a great spirit of faith, frequent use of prayer and sincere love of humility in order to avoid the dangers of study. It would be very detestable if the miserable knowledge I acquired could even a little make me forget my nothingness, that I owe everything to God and my entire concern must be to place myself after everyone else, whether in thought, word or action.

### *Meals* [p. 30]

Meals are another dangerous exercise in themselves and rarely carried out well. Often we forget that it is a disagreeable necessity of our present condition and that we should go to the refectory with a certain feeling of distress and sadness, feeling sorry that it is a necessity that we carry out such a base activity in itself which we have in common with animals. We should feel sorry that we are going to provide strength for our enemy the flesh which might just take the opportunity to revolt against us.

To render this activity supernatural and meritorious before God, I will take care to go to the refectory reflecting on the thoughts and sentiments I have just indicated or I will try to elevate myself to other considerations suggested by a spirit of faith. I will unite myself with O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist], himself going to take the necessary nourishment to sustain his strength. My only intention will be to obey God who wants us to maintain our bodily health so that our soul is in a better state to serve him. I will try to recite very attentively and piously the prayers before and after this exercise. While I am eating, I will act with great modesty and politeness towards my neighbor. I will keep guard over my eyes, often lift my heart to God and especially try to follow carefully whatever is being read. At other times I will occupy myself with other thoughts which piety may inspire in a religious.

#### **4 - Annual retreat of 1830, given by Father M[ille].<sup>14</sup>**

*Meditations on the last end of man, sin, death, judgment and examples from the life of Jesus Christ.*

Beata solitudo, sola beatitudo. Billens, Saint Joseph. [p. 24]

[October] 24.

At last we are at the eve of the major retreat, that propitious time to renew the chain of divine graces that I have broken by my infidelities and to sincerely renew my dedication to the Lord. I feel guilty for not thinking enough about the retreat the past few days and not increasing my desire for it enough.

As we approached the opening exercise, I felt a tangible prompting to fervor which seemed to lead my heart to abandon itself entirely to God so as to profit well from the spiritual exercises. During the free time before the ceremony, I tried to convince myself [p. 25] of the need for the retreat by glancing over my conduct of the past year and considering the motives furnished by the present circumstances. I felt greatly inspired during the singing of the *Veni Creator* and all during the ceremony. The rest of the evening I spent in various considerations on the retreat.

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<sup>14</sup> Orig.: AGR, Casimir Aubert file, no. 3, A, 46 pages.

[October] 25.

In the first meditation on the need for the retreat and the means to carry it out well, I was a little distracted at the beginning, however I didn't find it all that hard to convince myself of the great need I have for these holy exercises. Among all the means I reflected on, prayer and mistrust of myself struck me very much, so much so that I thought about it for part of the morning and took some worthwhile resolutions in this regard. I was still a little distracted at the beginning and even somewhat cold in the [p. 26] meditation on the last end of man. I thought about this all during the remaining free time. I was rather moved by the thoughts that came to me on God's goodness who wanted to create me a man instead of some other creature that he left in nothingness or gave another nature. I was also quite moved by the misuse that I have formerly made of creatures that God gave me to serve his glory. I was deeply humbled by this thought and I determined to work from now on with greater ardor to compensate God for such ingratitude. I felt a very special impression in every exercise. It seemed that God himself was working in my soul in a very tangible manner.

I was very edified by the conference on the report given by my brother [Oblates] on the sentiments that God had made them experience. I still felt very inspired during the recitation of Matins and Lauds. During the conference on the purpose of religious life, I was a little cold at the beginning from which flowed a sort of drowsiness that I first felt [p. 27], but after that I was deeply touched that God had called me to religious life at a time when that calling was such a great grace. Later when I reflected on the purpose of this state and how little I had accomplished it, I was overwhelmed by my infidelities and resolved that from now on I would appreciate much more the good fortune of my state in life. I had found this meditation somewhat short. In prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, I felt full of confidence in O[ur] L[ord's] goodness, and as I paid him homage I begged him to make me be more faithful in the future. During the singing of the *Miserere* I shared King David's attitude and applied each of his words to myself. As the subject for tomorrow's meditation was being given, I was already greatly moved by the various considerations given to us and felt great compunction in my soul arising from those thoughts.



[October] 26. Second day [p. 28].

In the first meditation on mortal sin, I was very drowsy at first and couldn't focus on anything. However, I finally became alert and several thoughts struck me, especially the seriousness of this sin, in regard to God that good Father we offend, and in regard to ourselves whom it completely separates from God. During all the free time before holy Mass I tried to instill within myself a profound horror for this sin. I wept over past transgressions and sustained such sentiments of compunction during almost the entire holy Mass.

I was moved by Father M[ille]'s instruction on mortification and strongly resolved to deprive myself of many things that please me in reparation for the misuse I had made of creatures during [my] youth.

Even though I was somewhat cold at the beginning of the meditation on venial sin, nevertheless [p. 29] several thoughts struck me. Most of all, I couldn't imagine one loving God and still again willingly displeasing Him. I also had the inspiration that I should make reparation to Him after my consecration by a blameless life, since I had offended Him so seriously. I deeply humbled myself and asked pardon for having done just the opposite up to the present. The humility of my brothers greatly edified me when they expressed their feelings during the conference. Inside, I was greatly humbled by it. I felt deeply inspired with great fervor during recitation of Matins.

I was rather touched by the various thoughts I had in the meditation on death, the unfortunate death of a lukewarm religious and the happiness of that of a fervent religious, and especially the mercy of God who did not strike me down during my disordered life. For myself, the conclusion from this meditation was that I should always keep myself prepared by a fervent life so that when the moment comes I will not be upset for having done penance. Once again I was greatly touched by the ceremony before the Blessed Sacrament. I aroused myself with every feeling of regret and confidence.

The 27th. Third day. [p. 30]

In the first meditation on particular judgment I clearly imagined myself, one soul alone with God alone, who will judge it impartially on its works. I saw that if I were to die now, not only would I be condemned for what I have done in the past but also for what I have done in religious life, what I thought I had done the best, being fearful of the judg-

ment I had merited. I spurred myself on to contrition and especially resolved to follow the model of O[ur] L[ord] in my actions so they might be acceptable to the Sovereign Judge. I was very struck by the talk on oraison which made it clear that this was the source of all my faults. During the meditation on hell, I was much more inspired than during the other two meditations which did not move me so profoundly. I was especially touched by the thought of separation from God and eternal punishment. I told myself that, since I had escaped hell, no humiliation should be excessive for me and that I should fear nothing after having merited so great chastisements. [p. 31] I was very edified by the sentiments experienced by my fellow Oblates during the conference. I was happy to see that everyone was working diligently and carefully to make this retreat useful for their perfection. In the meditation on the prodigal son, having applied this parable to my past life, I saw that it still applied to my present life even since I have been a religious. I deeply humbled myself before God, begged Him pardon and made a great resolve to return trustingly to Him and serve Him faithfully from now on.

[October] 28. Fourth day.

I was distracted at the beginning of the first meditation on O[ur] L[ord]'s rights to our attachment and that we imitate him. When my attention reverted I busied myself to consider the various motives presented to us. I was struck by the reflections that God inspired in me on O[ur] L[ord] as redeemer and our model; I made him a promise to cling to him from now on and to follow him in everything. I begged him to grant me the grace of union with his divine person so that I might love what he loved, value what he prized, and act with the same [p. 32] sentiments he had. Lastly, that I judge everything and do everything as he did himself. I continued in these sentiments right up to Mass time. I requested the same grace from O[ur] L[ord] at Holy Communion which I was fortunate enough to receive. It seemed to me that through his kindness I truly resolved to conduct myself according to all these considerations.

During the meditation on the Incarnation of the divine Word, I was deeply moved by the goodness of God's Son who without any merit on the part of mankind humbled himself to become a man. For some length of time I felt a deep emotion in considering the profound humiliation of the divine Word when he united himself to our miserable nature, so

much so that when I came to reflect on my pride, I was seized by a secret indignation at myself. I couldn't imagine how I could entertain any feeling of pride. These reflections struck me even more when I thought of how many other motives I had for being humble. I was deeply touched by all that and much inclined to humility. I promised God to be faithful to these good dispositions [p. 33] which his grace had worked in me.

During the meditation on the birth of O[ur] L[ord], I imagined myself to be present to all that took place in this great mystery. I shared in all the sentiments of Saint Joseph and the Blessed Virgin. I was deeply touched by the feelings which arose from that. I conceived a fresh esteem for poverty and sincerely promised O[ur] L[ord] to observe it better.

[October] 29. Fifth day.

I was rather unmoved during the first meditation on the flight into Egypt and couldn't focus on any thought. However, I gradually became alert. Once again, I became part of the scene of this mystery and saw all that went on between the Angel and Saint Joseph and the rest of the Holy Family. Their prompt, blind obedience struck me in a very special manner. I followed them in their difficult journey and was glad to think that at least their sorrow was assuaged by O[ur] good Saviour's presence. These sentiments stayed with me during free time.

I was deeply impressed with the meditation on the hidden life of O[ur] L[ord]. It seemed that it made me better [p. 34] appreciate my good fortune in being able to imitate O[ur] L[ord] in this manner of life.

The exercise of the conference.<sup>15</sup>

## **5 - Annual Retreat of 1831. Billens, Saint Joseph.<sup>16</sup>**

*Meditations on the Last Things. God's mercy which called him to religious life in a young Congregation, full of fervour and having Jesus Christ himself as model.*

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<sup>15</sup> The text ends in this way.

<sup>16</sup> Orig.: AGR, Casimir Aubert file, No. 3, A, 46 pages. Following Oblate custom, this retreat must have taken place during the last week in October.

Beata solitudo, sola Beatitudo. [p. 39]

[p. 40] Third meditation on the purpose of religious life.

Several thoughts struck me a great deal in this meditation. Especially was I deeply moved when I thought of how great a blessing the religious vocation was for me. O God! In what a state I was when you called me to yourself! What were you able to see in me that brought me such a precious grace on your part? You deigned to number me among your dear children, I who have merited so little and have left in the world a multitude of young people a thousand times more worthy than me. Into what a religious congregation have you called me, into a newborn Society, full of fervour which has no other model of perfection than O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist] himself [p. 41]. Have I at least responded to your blessings since I have had the good fortune to be consecrated to you? Alas! How many infidelities and miseries there have been. Oh! Would that I make every effort in the future to render myself pleasing in your eyes by perfect regularity. So that these sentiments do not dissipate with time, during every monthly retreat I will spend some time in recalling my duties as a religious, examining if I have been faithful to them and taking the means to persevere in these resolutions. In this regard, I will make a short examination of myself every Sunday.

Second day. First and second meditations on mortal sin.

The different reflections suggested to us on this matter impressed me a good deal. The way sin was punished in the angels, in Adam, etc., helped me to see how opposed it is to God's holiness. I was also deeply touched by the deplorable state in which it left the guilty person and when I reflected on myself I couldn't refrain from feeling a deep contrition, confusion and horror of sin. This impression was especially much stronger during the second meditation. Everything I experienced [p. 42] in the morning came back in a stronger way so much so that my soul was almost suffocated by it. O God! It is only too true that I have dared to raise the flag of revolt against you a thousand times. I, who am dust and ashes, wasn't afraid to provoke my Creator, King and Father. And I am still alive and God still has had pity on me after all that. O Lord, from now on implant in me a more lively horror for sin so that its very name or shadow makes me shudder and tremble at the very thought that I could once again offend you mortally. To avoid this terrible misfortune I will seek safety behind the walls of the vows and religious observances and in the future I will make every effort so that I don't allow the enemy to penetrate in any way in this outpost.

During the three o'clock conference I was penetrated with several feelings of grace and especially when I saw [some] of my bro[thers] whom God left without consolation, I told myself not to linger over sensible devotion with which God had gifted me, but most of all to act in such a way that this retreat would be more profitable for me than others from which I have unfortunately reaped so little fruit.

In the third meditation on venial sin I was again touched by several reflections which always make a new impression on me. O God! How can one say that he loves you when he still consents to offend you. How can true love be reconciled with this harmful disposition? [p. 43] But who could consent to venial sin if he considers the sufferings to which he exposes himself when he sins, without speaking of purgatory. Should a person not tremble when he thinks that the effect of venial sin is to lead insensibly to mortal sin. Often how slippery is the way from one kind to the other.<sup>17</sup> How was I not afraid of the frightful incertitude that I put myself into in regard to some sins even though they were definitely not mortal. To avoid this misfortune, I will carefully fulfill the least religious observances as a preservative even for venial sins. I will keep careful watch over myself in regard to my dominant passion and will make use of the sacrament of reconciliation and the monthly retreat for that purpose.

Third day. First meditation on death.

This meditation rather touched me, especially when I considered the death of a fervent religious as opposed to that of a lukewarm religious. I will certainly die but know neither the time or place of my death. But if I want to die a good death in the sight of the Lord, shouldn't I lead a fervent life from now on so that death never surprises me unprepared. To prepare myself for a holy death I will faithfully observe the practice of preparing for death during monthly retreats and will daily say a special prayer to the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph.

{p. 44} Second and third med[itations].

The meditations on judgment and hell touched me somewhat, [but] not as much as I would have wanted. However, it would have been very difficult for me not to be moved by the various reflections I made on

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<sup>17</sup> Several words are scarcely legible here.

these terrible topics. What would have become of me if God had not exercised the greatest mercy toward me, and after meriting hell how could I find anything painful on earth where I must expiate my sins? How could feelings of pride still arise in my heart when I realize that I am still alive due to divine goodness? On the contrary, how can it be that I am not filled with feelings of humility? O would that these thoughts be enough to make me shudder at seeing the least fault and inspire in me at the same time the deepest feelings of self-abasement.

Fourth day. First meditation on the prodigal son.

I was deeply moved during this meditation when I reflected on the great goodness God showed me when he called me back to himself. The sight of his merciful conduct and admirable means with which he had.<sup>18</sup>

## **6 - Annual retreat of 1832,<sup>19</sup> Marseilles.<sup>20</sup>**

*Annual retreat and preparation for diaconate.*

L.J.C. et M.I.      J.M.J.

Beata solitudo! sola beatitudo!

October 6. Evening [p. 1]

We have at last arrived at these days of salvation and blessing, days during which the Lord in his merciful goodness has always showered his most abundant graces on me. Oh! If I ever should have wished ardently to begin a retreat, it is certainly on this occasion when special reasons prompt me to make it well and make me feel the need even more. Besides the reasons that I have gleaned from my present interior state, besides the negligence in my conduct, the habit of carelessness and imperfection in which I find myself ensconced and which make me aware of how necessary these spiritual exercises are for me to experience and regain the fervor I should have for God's service, besides all these motives, I still have others which are very apt [p. 2] to move my

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<sup>18</sup> The text ends this way.

<sup>19</sup> Orig.: AGR, Casimir Aubert file, no. 3, B, 20 pages. According to this text, Casimir made this retreat alone, but followed the meditations of Father Nepveu or Father Bourdaloue.

<sup>20</sup> The word "Marseilles" was added later. No doubt this retreat was started at Billens where the scholastics still were.

heart. Actually, I am at the eve of receiving one of the highest and most excellent orders in the Church of J[esus] C[hrist]. In a few days I am going to be elevated to that high dignity after which I will have only to receive the sublime priestly order. Thus, this retreat takes both the place of the annual retreat and serves to prepare me for ordination to the diaconate. How fervently should I begin these holy exercises, how ardently should I apply myself so that enlightened by heavenly lights and enflamed with divine love I can purify my heart and keep myself from any blemish, motivate myself to serve the Lord from now on with limitless devotion and present myself next Sunday as an agreeable victim to the Lord and abundantly receive the inestimable gifts attached to the order which I will have the good fortune to receive. Such are the thoughts, the sentiments which should inspire me during the course of my retreat and help me make these exercises with all the fervor of which I am capable. [p. 3]

October 7. Second day of the retreat.

First meditation on the importance of the retreat and the means to make it well.

It wasn't hard to convince myself of the need for the retreat with the powerful motives I have this year. I especially thanked the Lord for the grace he gave me of setting these days aside for recollection to immerse my soul in the meditation of eternal truths, a grace he doesn't give to so many others more worthy than I. I especially applied myself to forming the disposition to do everything God might ask of me, surrendering myself to the Lord's hands, ready to carry out whatever he inspires in me during the retreat. I have also taken the firm resolution to keep myself deeply recollected in complete solitude, to pray very much to and recommend myself very often during the day to the Blessed Virgin, our dear mother, to my guardian angel, my patron saints, and lastly I have tried to strengthen sincere feelings of distrust in myself and trust in God. [p. 4]

Second medit[ation] on man's last end.

This meditation made the expected impression on me that it should make. I was forcefully struck by the various considerations I made to convince myself that God alone was man's last end. I was humbled with the thought that not only have I not fulfilled this purpose in my past life for which God had created me, but even in religious life I have not

always acted for God alone. I asked the Lord's forgiveness and sincerely disposed myself to be indifferent to whatever was not for God from now on and to have only his glory in mind.

Third medit[ation] on the purpose of religious life.

The rigorous obligation imposed on religious to constantly tend to perfection struck me deeply. Possibly these reflections made a deeper impression on me than any others I had made on this topic. The negligence with which I have fulfilled this duty up to now left me in great consternation. I expressed my regret to the Lord and renewed [p. 5] the resolution I had taken at other times about this to spend several moments during each monthly retreat to examine whether I have faithfully fulfilled my obligations in this regard. I don't know to what I could attribute my rare experience today; a kind of feeling of isolation completely penetrated me; I clearly perceived what a great advantage we ordin[arily] have in our communities to be able to make a common retreat, to encourage and help one another, whereas when one is alone whatever advantage is gained by the more complete solitude is counter-balanced by what one misses from the good example of others.

October 8. Second day of the retreat.

First medit[ation] on mortal sin.

The considerations I made on this topic also struck me very much. The punishment of the bad angels, of Adam and the death of O[ur] L[ord] all gave me a lively sense of the great evil of mortal sin. From that, [p. 6] I took the opportunity to once more humble myself before God due to my past faults. I groaned profoundly over our sad situation which leaves us with the possibility of offending God mortally. I aroused in myself a deep horror of sin and took the good resolution faithfully to follow all my Rules and use them as a rampart against the enemy's wiles.

Second medit[ation] on venial sin.

This meditation also had a deep influence on me. It seemed that I clearly perceived the full malice of venial sin and especially how incompatible it was with sincere love for God. Before God I groaned over the ease with which I had allowed myself to commit it and promised him seriously to be more faithful in the future.



Third medit[ation] on hell.

I will not enter here into the details of the varied impressions this meditation made on me. I felt what I usually experience whenever I have just reflected on this terrible subject.

I used the free time between exercises to make a general review [p. 7] of the whole year so as to subsequently confess all the faults I had noticed.

Third day. October 9.

The first medit[ation] was on the prodigal son. I applied this parable in all its aspects not only to my past life but also to my present situation. I was deeply touched by the good thoughts and sentiments that God inspired in my heart and threw myself at O[ur] L[ord's] feet with great contrition for the sins I committed after having resolved to be more faithful to him. I begged him to welcome me back again with his customary kindness.

I made the second meditation on the two standards, on the reign of Our L[ord] J[esus] in our souls and concentrated principally on sincerely attaching myself to O[ur] L[ord] and firmly disposing myself from now on to live only according to his spirit, teachings and the inspirations of his grace.

The subject of my third meditation was the Divine [p. 8] Word's deep humility in becoming man. The reflections I made on this topic touched me profoundly. It seemed that at the sight of this humility of God's son I felt the need more than ever for this virtue and a lively desire to apply myself to it with great care. I made my annual confession today, was deeply touched during the exercise and consoled thereafter; it seemed that God wanted me to experience the full sweetness of his mercy.

Fourth Day. October 10.

I took the mystery of O[ur] L[ord's] birth as the subject of my first meditation. In my imagination I followed the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph going to the stable which witnessed the birth of O[ur] Saviour. All around I admired the extreme poverty in which this dear Master wished to be born and I was certainly convinced of his great love for this beautiful virtue. Several times I reflected on my life to congratulate myself on my good fortune to be able to imitate O[ur] L[ord] in that

even though in a very imperfect manner and I formed a sincere disposition to practice poverty with the most scrupulous care. [p. 9]

Today I was fortunate enough to receive Holy Communion during which I did not feel all the sentiments I should have.

The flight into Egypt was the topic of my second meditation. In this mystery I admired the great example of obedience on the part of the whole holy family and especially of O[ur] L[ord] Jesus Christ. For a long time I lingered over the thoughts and feelings prompted by this admirable conduct of God. Then, I reviewed my own life so as to formulate a firm resolution to practice more faithfully from now on the so essential virtue of obedience in all its aspects.

I made the third meditation on the hidden life of O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist]. This exceptional conduct moved me a great deal. I contemplated at great length the divine Child filled with eternal wisdom spending his first years and most of his life in the exercise of obscure and demanding work in Saint Joseph's workshop. I admired the heavenly life led by the holy family, since O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist] animated everything with his spirit and how much the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph must have profited from that long presence of O[ur] L[ord] with them. After that I reflected on myself to be convinced of the excellence of the interior life and to form the resolution to always prefer activities of this nature over exterior works whenever obedience allows me the freedom.<sup>21</sup>

## 7 - General review of the year, October 6-10, 1832.<sup>22</sup>

*Imperfection and negligence in his exercises, failings in his conduct, graces received, means to take for a better life.*

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<sup>21</sup> These notes end in this way. Apparently, Casimir must have left hastily for Marseilles where he received the diaconate from the hands of Bishop Fortuné de Mazenod on October 14, 1832; Eugene de Mazenod received episcopal ordination at Rome on the same day.

<sup>22</sup> Orig.: AGR, Casimir Aubert file, No. 3, B, 20 pages. This text is not dated but, at the end of the 3rd meditation on October 8, 1832, Casimir stated that he was working on this review during free moments.

L.J.C. et M.I.

[p. 14] To correct my defects more easily and so tend to the perfection to which I am called, in a few words I will outline the principal imperfections and negligences that I have allowed to infiltrate my exercises during the year that has just ended. At the same time I will attempt to note defects capable of dominating my entire conduct and the special graces that I have received from God. Finally, I will point out means to take for a better life in the future.

In the last annual retreat, I sincerely promised God that I would be faithful to him from now on, do violence to myself when nature found repugnant what ever grace would ask of me and, lastly, carry out all my religious duties with complete regularity. But alas! how vain were these promises, as I soon fell back into my usual lax and imperfect form of life! The great retreat had scarcely ended and I was still in our house at Billens when I allowed myself to commit many faults even though I was carefully watching my conduct. The trip after that [p. 15] contributed not a little to lead me into dissipation and throw me off the track to some degree. Once back at Marseilles, I was able to regain somewhat the spirit of the retreat I had made to prepare for the sub-diaconate<sup>23</sup> and, in actual fact, whether it was the retreat itself or the grace God was going to grant me in receiving this order, all the good feelings and dispositions that I had before were renewed in me. Immediately after ordination I got back to studies and it was mainly then that began the time of my imperfections and negligences, possibly overloaded with too many things at once. This multiplicity occasioned many faults in me and threw me into an habitual state of interior dissipation and overzealousness which greatly hindered my advancement in perfection. It happened that since I was almost totally absorbed in study matters, I lost sight of myself to some degree and payed only slight attention to my religious duties and almost totally neglected a regular lifestyle [p. 16]. Thus, even though I

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<sup>23</sup> According to the details furnished in his retreat notes, Casimir made his annual retreat at Billens at the end of October 1831. After that he went to Marseilles for his ordination to the subdiaconate on December 17, 1831, and then returned to Billens for the school year. He went back to Marseilles to receive the diaconate on October 14, 1832 after beginning his retreat at Billens.

often did not perceive myself in that state which caused me so much pain and from which I had a lively desire to escape and conduct myself less imperfectly, however, carried away by the torrent of my activities, I always went on without correcting myself, always being in the same situation and not knowing how to get a hold on myself after and do violence to myself so as to avoid my usual faults. It was thanks to the monthly retreats which our Rules so wisely suggest and I carefully followed that, glancing at my conduct, I saw all this disorder and sincerely regretted it. I even took resolutions to correct myself but it didn't take me long to fall back into my usual imperfections. Added to that, during these past few months I have experienced difficulties of a new kind which were very perceptible, my imagination was obsessed with the most repugnant images; disordered movements arose in me for the least thing and often without any apparent cause, all these things very painful in themselves tormented me a great deal [p. 17]. Instead of seeking an efficacious remedy to these difficulties by trying to gently distract myself, I often gave in to curiosity and I don't know what weakness which made me read a few words of so delicate a matter which added to my troubles and sometimes threw me into a terrible state. Oh! would that the very memory of all these troubles bring me profound humility; Oh God! what things men are capable of when you abandon them for even a moment to themselves, what an abyss of corruption! I still shudder just to think about it.

It is not that amidst so many causes of imperfection that I have just noted that I didn't have the means to avoid them and live a more regular life; I can say that God's grace didn't abandon me even for an instant, to reproach me for my negligence and inspire me to fervour. During monthly retreats, on great feast days and on several other occasions I received very special graces which would have sufficed to make me overcome my lassitude if I had not been so weak and insensitive [p. 18].

A special grace God gave me that I should recall here is to have made me realize the complete vanity of all human affairs and especially of learning and profoundly convinced that it was in him alone that I could find peace and happiness.

I will go into a little more detail concerning the main faults into which I fell (I groan as I recall so many infidelities). Sometimes omitting preparation for mental prayer, the most frequent neglect. Getting up: lazy at times, very often neglecting to do it with a spirit of faith, not

keeping guard over my thoughts and preparing myself for oraison. Oraison: sleepy quite often or very distracted, thinking of almost nothing. I didn't make up for it after or at least did so very imperfectly. Holy Mass: heard carelessly, praying too little and even being distracted. I often missed remote preparation for Holy Communion, neglected immediate preparation and was not recollected after [having] received O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist] and was somewhat cold during thanksgiving [p. 19]. Divine Office: constantly preparing minimally and being so distracted that I had to repeat the main sections. Reciting it immodestly, I inverted the order through negligence. Examinations: often distracted, getting nothing out of them, satisfied with making a superficial review without trying to detest the faults committed or taking means to avoid them. Visits to the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin: sometimes omitted or shortened, very often done carelessly. Rosary, vocal prayers, prayers before and after meals: distracted, done routinely without a spirit of faith and piety. Spiritual reading: omitted sometimes, sometimes shortened, very often done with no results due to superficiality and curiosity. Studies: being too concerned with them, not being guided by a spirit of faith, looking only for natural satisfaction, rarely lifting my heart to God, doing them without any order and sometimes just from vanity. Indi[vidual] exercises: often carried out without a spirit of faith, immodestly, paying little attention to my words, speaking little about God, rarely lifting up my heart, absenting myself from recreation without telling anyone. Poverty: I gave away or requested paper without permission and took little care for my belongings. Chastity: very weak custody of the eyes or the imagination. Questionable readings, out of curiosity, etc. Obedience: I did not conform my judgment very well, (often) did not respond to the first sound of the bell. Silence: not kept, especially in less strict moments, in the refectory, in the corridors. Humility: I had vain thoughts, somewhat encouraged, and sometimes I did not interiorally accept things that could have humiliated me, fled from them, excused myself, etc. I sometimes (involuntarily) spoke uncharitably or untruthfully. Mortification: exteriorly, I didn't practice it very much, neglected my practices of it, often abandoning myself to the whims of my curiosity, seldom doing violence to myself; but especially interiorly, I lived a very dissipated life, stopping at whatever came

into my head and thus I, little by little, projected myself into such a state as to be no longer master of my thoughts, due to the too great freedom given to my mind.<sup>24</sup>

## 8 - Retreat for the priesthood, March 24-April 7, 1833.<sup>25</sup>

*Meditations on the virtues, the ordination ceremony and Mass. During his first Mass, offering of his life as a victim of charity or zeal.*

L.J.C. et M.I.      J.M.C.

### Horarium

5 o'clock	Rising
5:15	Prayer and first meditation.
6:00	Prime and terce.
6:30 - 7 o'clock	Holy Mass, etc.
7:30	Revue of Medi[tation], etc.
8:00	Study of rub[rics]
9:00	Second meditation
10:00	Review and free time
11:00	Spiritual reading
11:30	Sext and none, etc., as the com[munity]
2:30	Free reading
3:00	Stations
3:45	Visit to O.L., and the Blessed Virgin, etc.

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<sup>24</sup> The text concludes in this way.

<sup>25</sup> Orig: AGR, Casimir Aubert file, no. 4, D, 32 pages. This retreat was made at Le Calvaire in Marseilles, where the scholastics were living under the direction of Father Honorat, the superior of the community. Casimir made the retreat with other scholastics and seemed to be still following the work of Father Nepveu or Father Bourdaloue for the meditations of the first week.

- 4:00        Matins and lauds
- 5:30        Third meditation
- 6:15        Review and free time
- 7:30        Oraison with the community
- All the other exercises with the community.

J.M.J.

Beata solitudo ... sola beatitudo

[March 24, 1833]. [p. 3]

The day is very near when the God of mercy will put the cap on the blessings which he has so abundantly showered on me. Just two more weeks and prostrate at the foot of the altar I will receive from the hands of the pontiff of J[esus] C[hrist] the greatest power that can be given a man. I will be admitted to the number of ministers of the divine Saviour of the world and my soul will be marked [with] the indelible seal of the priesthood. Just two more weeks and I will, for the first time, be clothed with the sacred priestly vestments and will ascend the altar of the living God to offer the holy and awesome sacrifice to the august Trinity. Under the eyes of the whole heavenly court my trembling voice will call down the holy and immaculate Victim. The few mysterious words that J[esus] C[hrist] will place in my mouth will perform the greatest of prodigies. I will hold the adorable Jesus in my weak hands. I myself will take the body of that spotless Lamb and drink from the precious blood which takes away the sins of the world and grants immortality. Oh God! Isn't that really a dream, a sweet illusion? Can such great happiness await me in a few days? How can I prepare myself to receive so many graces and render myself worthy of such great favours? I should be set on fire with love and burn with seraphic ardour. My soul should be adorned with a purity above that of the angels themselves and of all the virtues which make of the priest a new J[esus] C[hrist]. I am nevertheless so cold, so full of imperfections and miseries. Oh God! You alone can make up for my want and transform me completely. May your Holy Spirit come down into my soul and, during this retreat, enlighten it with the most brilliant beams so it can appreciate the full sublimity of the priesthood. May he warm it with a sacred ardour so that it will be less unworthy of the great favours with which you are going to fill it. O divine Jesus, it

seems that I sincerely want to belong to you, to take the occasion of this most solemn moment of my life to offer you the most absolute gift of all that I am and unite myself to you in the most intimate manner. Fortify these dispositions that you yourself have deigned to place in my soul. Allow yourself to be touched by the supplications of so many fervent people who will be praying to you on our behalf. Bless our retreat, for alas! without you every human effort leads nowhere. So, come to help me, God, so that during these days of recollection my soul may rejoice in the most abundant sharing of your grace. Whether by myself in your sanctuary or in my cell, may I raise myself in thought above the earth and for a time fix my abode in the heavens. May every foreign thought disappear to give place to sublime thoughts which ought from now on to keep me occupied. May my imagination be filled only with holy images and my heart overflowing with every sentiment of piety, burning with [p. 4] the most ardent love. Those are the sentiments which you yourself place in my soul. O adorable Saviour, grant them growth to fully develop during this retreat so that when the memorable day arrives when the pontiff confers the highest of graces on me, I may be worthy to become the first-born of this holy and tender father and receive all the gifts he will impart to my soul...<sup>26</sup>

[p. 6] J.M.J. Fourth day, [March 27].

Today, I made my fir[st] meditation on the example of poverty that Our L[ord] J.C. gives us in his birth. I scarcely had the time to delve into the topic since other thoughts occupied me somewhat. I tried to make up for it afterwards and arouse sentiments in myself which such a topic naturally inspires. I begged O[ur] d[ivine] Saviour to make me appreciate the excellence and need for such a virtue and to place generous dispositions in my soul to practice it to a high degree, such as is demanded by the perfection of the state which I am about to enter. I can say that I was both struck and touched a good deal at the same time and that the meditations I made on religious virtues have made a completely different impression on me than before, now that I add to it the thought that these virtues must make me worthy of being the Lord's pleasing servant.

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<sup>26</sup> Several pages end in this way, unexpectedly, and are not continued. On April 6, 1833, Casimir was the first Oblate to be ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Eugene de Mazenod of Icosia.



O Jesus! O my God! What can I do to render you worthy gratitude for so many favours you have showered on me? How can I consider of any worth the meagre sacrifice of earthly goods so as to thus more intimately unite myself to you, my only sovereign Good? O Lord! may I at least not spoil the offering and practice this holy virtue of poverty in all its perfection and may the present circumstance be an occasion for me to increase as much as possible in the practice of virtues which will render me agreeable in your eyes. I promise it to you Jesus, with full heart-felt sincerity, and I have the sweet hope that you will powerfully help me with your holy grace to be faithful to my promises. Amen. Amen.

Since I recalled a few sins and happenings of my past life which I had forgotten to confess in the kind of gen[eral] confession that I made last evening, I went to find o[ur] v[ery] R[everend] Super[ior] Gen[eral] to confess to him all of those impure leftovers of sin. I wish to note here a thought which struck me deeply in all that. It is the care with which God himself proceeds to purify my soul by gently placing before my eyes some past circumstances which I had never remembered. O Lord! how kindly you come to help me and fill me with the highest esteem for the holiness of the state to which I am to be raised, since you desire that absolutely nothing impure remain in my soul and you carefully remove the last residue of its past faults.

[p. 8] J.M.J. Fifth day, [March 28].

Today the community oraison was much shortened as we counted the thanksgiving after holy Communion. In that way, I scarcely had time to even go a little bit into the topic I had chosen. I made up my mind to make it the subject of my 2nd meditation. During this exercise I was somewhat struck by the considerations that are ordinarily made about venial sin. It is a thought which always makes a new impression on me every time I reflect how great a disorder it is that a soul favoured with heavenly blessings can nevertheless deliberately offend God. I admit that I can't comprehend how someone [can] say he loves God with his whole soul when he willingly commits acts which can displease him. The thought that one saddens the Holy Spirit by venial sin and places himself in a position to offend God seriously and thus often one is thrown into the embarrassing state of not knowing to what point a sin committed has been grave.

I was once again struck by the reflections I made about venial sin as being closely related to the abuse of grace as sooner or later leading one who has been held under its sway thereto. But what touched me most was considering the special character of malice that venial sin has in a priest. O God! It is certainly true that someone scarcely loves you if he deliberately offends you; it is also true that thereby one prepares for himself a painful purgatory in the next life and exposes himself to seriously outrage you. These reasons are a thousand times sufficient to forever turn a heart ever so little faithful from again voluntarily committing venial sin, but how much greater these motives become when they are considered in regard to a priest! O divine Jesus! how could I dare to allow myself to sadden you, to offend you, to have a voluntary spot on my soul, no matter how minor it might be, and then to approach your holy altar and say that I have come innocently: *ego autem in innocentia mea ingressus sum* [ps. 25,1], to offer to the heavenly F[ather] the holy and immaculate host and nourish myself with the flesh of the spotless lamb? No, my God, such a horrible misfortune will never happen to me. O, I sincerely promise you that and hope that you will help me to keep that promise; I would rather die a thousand times than resolve to deliberately commit a venial sin.

During holy Communion this morning, God granted me much tangible devotion. O[ur] dear Saviour made me feel his divine presence in a special manner. He seemed to shower his graces abundantly on my soul, and my heart, touched by I don't know what sentiments mixed with love, gratitude and prayer, gently united itself with the adorable Jesus and felt strengthened by that holy union and inspired with the sincere resolution to carry out everything he might ask of me. The thought that the communions that I make during this retreat would be the last I would make in this way that they should serve as the most powerful and efficacious means to render me pure and as worthy as possible of the inestimable grace by which I am preparing myself. All these considerations again made a great impression on me and helped not a little in keeping me in deep fervour during thanksgiving.

[p. 9] What I read from Molina struck me forcefully and gave me a very high notion of the most holy sacrifice of the Mass. The Holy Spirit deigned to illumine me with his light to have me see in a very clear way a portion of the excellence of the Holy Mass and at the same time deeply convinced me of the need for great holiness and extraordinary dispositions to offer the spotless victim and fulfill the functions which

elevate us not only above all the greatest personages of the Old Testament but even above the angels. O God! would that these thoughts be deeply engraved in my mind and the sentiments they inspire become ever stronger in my soul. How I realize how weak I am by myself! I at least try to find support to uphold me and that's why I have great recourse to prayer. I have been occupied often during the day with these thoughts and sentiments and I strove to obey these divine inspirations. It also seemed that from time to time I felt to a greater degree all the grandeur and excellence of the grace that the Lord was preparing for me and my heart was deeply touched at the same time.

I made my third meditation on the three degrees of humility. With God's grace I have been well grounded in the first two but had scarcely any trouble in convincing myself that this was still nothing and this foundation could never be solid until I had found a hold in the 3rd degree. As in all my retreats it seemed that I was well established in this degree, however experience has shown me the exact opposite, I concentrated on strengthening the motives which could lead me to adopt this resolution so that it would be more sincere and that I would keep it more faithfully in the future. God gave me the grace to feel more than ever how fitting and right it was that I ground myself in this state and especially how much the relationship I will have with O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist] will be powerful in committing me to it. Yes, O dear Jesus! even though it would make no difference to the glory of God or my salvation whether I followed the route of self-satisfaction, riches, honors, etc. or whether I took up the way of crosses, humiliations and poverty, nevertheless, for the love of you and that alone as the way that you walked, I would joyfully embrace it and consider myself a thousand times happy to be able to imitate you. So, wouldn't I have enough love in my heart to do whatever these ...

J.M.J. 6th day, [ March 29]. [p. 10]

I made my first meditation on the sublime gift of my priestly vocation. My reflections on this topic made a considerable impression on me, especially those taken from the ceremonies of priestly ordination. The Church's fervent prayers, that assurance they request through the mouth of the Pontiff that those chosen be worthy of the high dignity to be conferred on them, the words addressed to them by the Bishop, the mysterious anointings he gives them, the extraordinary power he gives them, all these thoughts were able to fully convince me of the grandeur

of the priesthood and the good fortune to have been called to it. But what struck me most was when I reflected on myself I saw how unworthy I was of such a favor. O my God! if, when I reflect on the great gift of my call to religious life, I cannot find any adequate sentiments to express my gratitude and admiration for your great mercy, what can I do when I consider that soon you are going to bestow on me a grace that is beyond all that the human mind can imagine? O God of kindness! Ah! if there is no one, no matter how innocent, who must regard himself a thousand times unworthy of so great a dignity, what should my attitude be, I who have so often and unworthily offended you, I who ought to dedicate my entire life to praising your infinite mercy for not at all having treated me as I deserved and who ought to be very satisfied to be the least of your servants. Profoundly engrave these sentiments of humility and gratitude in my soul. During this retreat, make me perceive the incomparable grandeur of the gift I am going to receive and, Lord, may I never have the misfortune of forgetting so much kindness and inestimable graces. Amen. Amen. Amen.

I didn't feel very inspired during holy Mass. That state even continued during communion but however, at thanksgiving O[ur] d[ivine] Saviour once again deigned to have me favorably sense his holy presence, filling my soul with sweet tenderness and fervor, keeping it in intimate union with his own and making it draw new strength and grace from his heart.

The topic for my 2nd meditation was the excellence of the priesthood on which I reflected, limiting myself to considering the comparison of the Catholic priesthood to that of the old law and the titles which the sacred writings give to priests, calling them gods, angels and kings. That meditation made a great impression on me; it seemed that after it I understood a little better the excellence of the priestly dignity and at the same time I was enlightened as to the great virtues which these titles demand of it. If the Lord demanded such respect for priests in the old law that he punished most severely whoever dared to insult them, if their office was considered something so high and excellent, those whose sublime function was to sacrifice and offer the flesh of animals to the Lord, which offerings had nothing in themselves which could have attracted God's glance and wash away the least sin, what expressions could adequately describe the priesthood in the Catholic church whose qualities are worthy of gaining the admiration of heaven and earth? How can one form an idea of the prerogatives of the priest of J[esus] C[hrist]

whose duties place him in direct contact with the divinity and allow him to daily offer to God a victim worthy of the infinite majesty!

[p. 11]

To give us an exalted notion of priests, holy scripture calls them gods, angels and kings. As gods, which indicates privileged beings who ought no longer to belong to earth but whose entire conversation should be in the heavens; as angels, raised above human nature by perfect purity, ardent zeal for the Lord's affairs and continual vigilance for man's salvation; as kings, who are men above their brothers in portraying every virtue and subduing all their passions so as to rule over themselves as over every other creature. O my God! How can someone understand such greatness? Oh! what precious and infinite grace you have set aside for me! May this notion inspire my soul to humble itself in its powerlessness to become worthy of such favours and that all my efforts go into begging you, night and day, that you yourself prepare me.

J.M.J. [p. 12]

This morning I had the good fortune once more to purify myself in O[ur] L[ord]'s blood through sacramental absolution. There I cleansed my soul of the residue of the sins of my past life and, after this exercise, I felt great consolation. O my God, I clearly see that you are a jealous God who cannot put up with the least stains in souls you are preparing to fill with your graces. Purify me more and more every day, O Source of all holiness, and do not leave in my soul any fault that I do not wash away with tears of repentance and your precious blood so that when the blessed day arrives, I can receive in ordination all the favours you reserve for those who worthily present themselves and can, after that, go up to the altar clothed in the robe of innocence.

I made my 9 o'clock meditation on the holiness of priests. God gave me the grace to deeply savor the various reflections that are usually presented on this topic and to be fully penetrated with the great thoughts which it naturally inspires. It seemed that all these reflections made a profound impression on my soul and, simultaneously, I begged O[ur] divine Saviour to enlighten me even more, to touch my heart and profoundly engrave on it everything that his divine Spirit deigned to show me at that moment. Yes, my God, a priest must be holy since he has such intimate contacts with you who are Holy, since he offers the holy and immaculate victim and his duties are entirely heavenly. O my

God! fill me with profound respect at the sight of so much greatness, so that I can understand how holy a priest ought to be. Yes, I should be as holy as God's son since I am to become another J[esus] C[hrist]. More holy than angels since I am to be raised above those heavenly spirits, more holy than Saint John the Baptist since the duties I am to fulfill are incomparably above those of the divine Precursor. I must be holy with what holiness! I must be like my divine Jesus, pure of every sin no matter how slight, *segregatus a peccatoribus*; clothed with every virtue, *in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae*, etc. And I am to possess these virtues in an eminent degree. O my God! what a reason to tremble and to humble myself! How dare I, imperfect as I am and still full of weaknesses, to advance? However, there is still hope in my heart. I know that you are all powerful and that you can change me in an instant and place the dispositions you require in my soul. Here I am, my Saviour, do with me whatever pleases you. Exercise your power and mercy on this poor sinner. Make me realize the high degree of holiness with which I must be invested in your sight and grant me at the same time the grace I need to arrive at it as soon as possible so that I may be less unworthy of being consecrated to you.

[p. 14] J.M.J.

I made my first meditation on the priestly functions in regard to the holy sacrifice of the Mass where O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist] is simultaneously the victim and the one offering the sacrifice. I was somewhat distracted during this exercise and so was not as affected as I should have been. However, I tried to make up for it after in the review which I expressly prolonged for half an hour. God gave me the grace to move myself to some degree and inspire a few good sentiments within me, but I especially made an effort to fervently pray to O[ur] divine Saviour. O dear Jesus, what a sublime and admirable divine sacrifice you have established in your holy Church! O God, you yourself have deigned to be the victim while fulfilling the office of priest at the same time. You have wished to choose men to carry out such great marvels in your name. You descend into his hands, surrendering yourself completely to him. And, in a few days, I also am to be elevated to this high dignity and carry out those divine duties, a joy that will be granted me not only once but daily my whole life long. O excessive love! O incomprehensible charity! O Jesus, what can I do to be worthy of such a favor and offer you in thanksgiving for such a gift? Oh, I can only offer you your very self, but that is enough for you are infinite. O my God, make me wor-

thy of such sublime duties, such will be my ceaseless prayer, with steadfast trust you will finally hear my supplications.

I was rather distracted during holy Mass with very little feeling; at holy Communion I had to carefully watch myself so as not to be distracted and almost had to make an effort to keep recollected and rouse some devotion in my soul, but I found myself better during thanksgiving. Once again, I felt the presence of the kind Jesus in a gentle yet vivid manner. I again set myself to praying hard, begging the adorable Saviour to grant to me, as well as to all my br[others] on retreat, the grace of fully recognizing the full grandeur of the gift awaiting us and to worthily dispose us for it by lively sentiments of love, devotedness and gratitude.

In the 9 o'clock meditation, I took the holy sacrifice of the Mass as my topic under the aspects of latria worship and thanksgiving. I was still somewhat ill-disposed, especially at the beginning, and I deeply humbled myself before God. I ardently implored O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist] to have mercy on me, not to allow me to remain thus, insensitive, as the retreat days ran their course and, in a short while, I was put back on the right road and I experienced almost nothing but good sentiments during the remainder of the meditation and lingered only on thoughts relating to my subject matter. I was deeply struck [p. 15] by some reflections I had on the obligation that men have to recognize, even in an external manner, God's sovereign dominion over every creature. I rejoiced to see that the Catholic Church possessed in O[ur] L[ord] a victim worthy to be offered to God in this intention. Likewise, I was greatly struck by the strict obligation that human nature has to render fitting gratitude to God for all the gifts he never ceases to bestow on us. Once again, I saw with great satisfaction that we have an easy way to fulfill these duties to God in a manner worthy of his majesty by offering him as a sacrifice of praise his only son O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist] who deigned to place himself in our hands and to immolate himself on our altars. Even though these thoughts did not give rise to any great feelings of piety in me, they did however give me a very exalted notion of the holy sacrifice of the Mass. When I came to consider that I would soon be commissioned by the church to offer these sacred duties to the Lord, I began to experience sentiments of humility and fear. Turning to O[ur] dear Saviour, I begged him always to penetrate me more and more

with these sublime thoughts and ever render me ever more worthy of being able to fulfill such a sublime ministry.

At the beginning of the 4:30 meditation, I was somewhat distracted, in a certain state of coldness and insensitivity that I didn't know how to account for. But in a few moments I felt better disposed and concentrated on the other two qualities of the holy sacrifice of the Mass, propitiation and petition. I was rather touched by the good fortune that I was going to have to offer God this holy victim who took away the sins of the world, and who will most undoubtedly destroy in me even the least traces of sin. In his blood I will be able to continually wash away my daily blemishes and live almost without sin in the Lord's eyes. I rejoiced to be able to offer God that innocent victim in compensation for so many crimes committed against his adorable majesty, the sight of which could plunge even the least sensitive soul into profound sadness. What impressed me deeply again was the thought that from now on nothing could be refused me and that I could ask God for every grace and favor that I wanted and that he would never be insensitive to the voice of the blood of J[esus] C[hrist], his divine Son. These reflections filled my soul with confidence and great consolation.

Today I felt very much less tangible devotion than on the other days. Not at all could I discover in myself that holy ardor which used to carry me away in oraison and in the other exercises. Far from that, I even at times felt a certain vague sentiment and ...

{p. 16} I made my first meditation today on the holy sacrifice of the Mass, stopping to reflect on the entire preparation up to the offertory. I considered what care the Church took so that everything that serves the holy sacrifice is worthy of its grandeur. I was astonished at the sight of the precautions she took so that the bread and wine, the matter to be used, would in no way be unworthy of the transmutation which they were to undergo. Through the vestments, the sacred vessels, the purification of hands that she asks a priest to carry out, she demonstrates the great notion that she wishes to give us of the mystery to be enacted. Besides that, the invocation of the adorable and most holy Trinity, the humble confession at the foot of the altar, and all those prayers up to the epistle through which the priest almost continuously begs pardon for his sins and great purity, all that deeply struck me. And the *Gloria in excelsis* wherein are presented the beautiful titles of O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist] and solemn homage is rendered to his greatness made me



understand what attention the Church took to give the priest the highest notion of the holy sacrifice, placing before his eyes the full majesty of the Victim to be offered there. I made no other reflections at all on these different prayers and ceremonies than those presented by the authors who treat of these matters. Neither did I experience any abundance of tender pious sentiments but I must avow that this meditation made a lively and profound impression on my soul which I wouldn't know how to describe. Never before did I have so exalted an idea of holy Mass.

In the second meditation on the holy sacrifice of the Mass, I concentrated on what happens from the offertory to the Canon. Once again I was deeply struck by the prayers of this part of holy Mass. The priest offers the holy victim in the name of the entire Church, for himself and all his brothers. What fervor and purity he must possess to exercise this sublime ministry? Mixing the water and wine, the Church wants him to ask for the most intimate union with O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist], a union well portrayed by that of the water and wine, and then she always asks him to reflect on his unworthiness and weakness *in spiritu humilitatis*. When the solemn moment draws near, she prescribes yet another purification for him and that he no longer turn toward the people as if to entirely limit himself to preoccupation with the great mysteries which will take place. I don't think that I made any reflections at all on this matter other than the ones ordinarily presented by the authors, but I must admit that I was greatly struck once more by the majesty and holiness of all that I recalled at that time. From time to time, at the sight of these great things, I ardently addressed myself to O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist], begging him for mercy and that he never allow me to treat with indifference [p. 17] or coldness these mysteries which are so capable of touching the heart and arousing admiration. I also requested that he prepare me well to receive the Order which will give me the power to ascend the altar and there offer the holy and awesome sacrifice.

What Father Honorat said at the 4 o'clock conference struck me deeply. He made us feel the importance of continuing and completing our retreat well. What made the greatest impression on me was that we will receive more or less grace at our ordination according to the greater or less preparation we have brought to it. The thought always makes a new impression on me and strongly inspires me to prepare myself well so that I will never have to reproach myself for not having received through my negligence the ordination graces that God had however prepared for me. Likewise, I was rather touched by the edifying report that

o[ur] brothers made of their feelings which encouraged me in making a new resolution to make my retreat well.

At the evening meditation I was not as deeply touched as I would have liked nor should have been by the considerations I made on the part of the Mass most likely to arouse admiration and all the ...

[p. 19] J.M.J. Holy Thursday, [April 4].

I did not follow the regular program today. O[ur] V[ery] R[everend] Sup[erior] Gen[eral], who is so good to me and forgets nothing during this retreat that could arouse greater fervor in me, gave me the consolation of serving him as deacon for the Pontifical Office he celebrated at the cathedral. First, I went to his place at the major seminary where he had come to spend a few days in recollection and disposed myself to celebrate the Last Supper of the Lord with greater purity by making a good confession. O God, how my heart was filled with ardent feelings as we began the ceremonies! I told myself that this was the last time that I would exercise these functions of the diaconate *ex officio proprio* and they are one of the most beautiful in the church. Oh, would that I could at least make up through piety and fervor of soul whatever I have lacked so many other times when I was fortunate enough to serve at the altar. No longer will it be in a church where the admirable institution of the Eucharist is celebrated, but I will be with the apostles in the upper room where the adorable Jesus will give the most striking proof of his love for mankind. I carry out for him the duties of a deacon and he wishes that I lend him my service. So let's be filled with fervor and charity; may a lively faith and profound respect penetrate my soul and may I no longer pay attention to anything except the marvelous things that will happen there. With what joy and sweet consolation did I sing the beautiful Gospel of Saint John; it even seemed to me that what my words were proclaiming was actually happening before my eyes and that I had the very special favor of being present. At the offertory, how my heart beat with joy and fervor as I held the holy ciborium containing the little hosts and with the Pontiff held the chalice which I offered with him for "our salvation and that of the whole world"! And at the consecration, I imagined O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist] in the midst of his disciples, taking the bread and wine, blessing them and changing them into his adorable Body and precious Blood. I prostrated myself at his feet with all the ardor of which my soul was capable. But the Communion was especially touching! As the ceremony began, one great thought kept me pre-

occupied, that it was the last time that I would receive Communion before being elevated to the priestly dignity. O my God! with what sentiments should my soul be inundated! Was it not necessary that by this Communion alone I repair all my coldness and past infidelities in regard to the adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist. With these dispositions, I saw the moment of Communion approaching. I went forward first and after chanting the confiteor I assisted at the Pontiff's side for the general Communion of clergy and people. Oh, the ceremony was especially touching at that moment. I believed myself to be truly at the Last Supper. In the elderly clergy I saw the apostles [p. 20] coming to receive Holy Communion with utmost piety. Oh, today the adorable Jesus made me understand something of his infinite goodness to men. This divine Saviour is full of love since he gives himself without distinction to anyone to make one and the same family from everyone. I see him enter the old man's heart just as he does that of a young child. He gives himself to the least woman with as much love as to the most illustrious in the assembly. Oh how happy I was during all the Communion time. With what consolation I presented the paten to those receiving so as to catch any small pieces of host which might have fallen without this precaution.

A moment no less joyful for my heart was when the officiating prelate went to the choir to consecrate the holy oils and left us alone at the altar near the Blessed S[acrament] with the sub-deacon. So, I was there to keep guard over and converse with my dear Jesus. The pontiff seemed to trust completely in my love for this divine Saviour. Oh how my heart was burning during the sweet communication I established with him. What holy transports took hold of my soul! Living faith rendered Jesus as present to me as if I saw him with my own eyes. I spoke familiarly with this good God. I especially begged him to make me worthy to soon be a pleasing minister before him. I asked him to let me love him more, to give me the grace to practice the highest virtues to an eminent degree out of love for him and to purify me now so that in two days I might confidently present myself to him to be consecrated in so special and excellent manner to him.

I spent the rest of the day quite well, especially the moments when I was adoring the Blessed Sacrament. Thinking about the immense love that J[esus] C[hrist] had for men in instituting this adorable sacrament and thanking him a thousand times for such a great gift, I kept on reflecting on a last consideration that came to mind, inspiring me to

greater fervor, namely, that in a few days, I myself will have the good fortune to consecrate the adorable body of my God and distribute it to the faithful and so I will live continually in the midst of the marvels of divine love. Oh! How holy and pure should be my life, and my dwelling place be only in heaven. With what virtues should my soul be adorned in order to worthily receive such great favors? O my God! you see my poverty, you possess all riches, you are all powerful and full of mercy, never leave me in my need, but instead flood my soul with your treasures of grace, amen, amen, amen.

Holy Saturday, April 6, 1833. [p. 21] J.M.J.

I am a priest. ... Thus, the most beautiful day of my life has arrived. The greatest gift that God could grant me in his all powerful mercy has just fulfilled my soul's desires. I am a priest of J[esus] C[hrist] for all eternity, *in aeternum*. No, this sacred character will never disappear from my soul. The Holy Spirit has stamped it with an indelible mark. I am a priest of J[esus] C[hrist], another J[esus] C[hrist] himself, almost a sharer of divine nature, above the angels, higher than the heavens, *excelsior coelis factus*. O good and adorable God, isn't it really an illusion? Is it really true that we are united in such intimate bonds? No, it isn't an illusion at all. Ah! The impressions that my soul felt at ordination are so strong that I can never doubt, and even if the certitude of having received this divine sacrament did not come to me in the matter and form applied in the most sensitive manner, God's extraordinary workings in me would suffice to fully assure me about it. O my God! gratitude obliges me to retrace here the sentiments that you deigned to grant my soul today, may they never be erased from my heart and may I never need to come and consult these lines to renew them in myself.

In this last week of retreat, I was not affected as much as I would have liked. The view of the priesthood approaching didn't make a strong enough impression on my soul and I often even found myself in a state of aridity. I was forced, so to say, to make headway by rowing. But from Holy Thursday onward I started to be touched in a very concrete manner and especially last night a great change took place in my soul. An impression made up of respect, trust and love took hold of me and filled me with a rather vague yet profound sentiment which enlightened me with insight into the great blessing that I was soon going to receive. This morning my guardian angel took care to wake me up early and immediately the great thought which should keep my attention took hold

of my mind. I got up right away so as to have more time to meditate on the extraordinary events which were going to ...

April 7, Easter Sunday. [p. 23] J.M.J.

O God, may your mercies be forever proclaimed! Let heaven and earth bless your name and continually thank you on my behalf since you have deigned to crown your blessings by granting me the most precious grace that a creature could ever want. This solemn day has finally arrived when I am to receive such a special favor from your munificence. A day of joy and grace, the most beautiful day of my life. Ah! The memory of such great goodness will never be erased from my soul. I can truly sing the joyful alleluia with the Church and repeat in a very special way those beautiful words: "*Haec dies quam fecit Dominus, exultemus et laetemur in ea ...*" Ah! Jesus Christ was offered as a paschal lamb for me also. *Pascha nostrum immolatus est Christus*. My soul, I ought to cry out with blessed Mary, Bless the Lord, my soul, for he has looked on the lowliness of his servant, for that reason they will call me blessed. God has done marvels for me, a hungry person he has filled with good things. *Magnificat*, etc. O happy moments, a thousand times happy are those that I have just spent before the altar of my God! How could I express all that happened in my soul at that time? O God! you have been kind and generous to me; even though I have been accustomed to the extraordinary effects of your grace, I must admit that I had never expected such a prodigious communication. From the very beginning of the holy sacrifice you gave me a very lively awareness of the grandeur of these mysteries I was celebrating. You raised my soul beyond earth and carried it to the heavens. There at the foot of your awesome throne, united to the priest par excellence, the one who offers himself as victim yet remains the principal consecrator, O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist], in the presence of my dear Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, of all the heavenly court, all the saints in heaven, and having below me all the Church militant impatiently awaiting the fruits of the adorable sacrifice that I was going to offer. I had especially before my eyes all those who are dear to me or attached to me by bonds of religion, blood and friendship. Finally, aware also of the sighs and sufferings of the souls in purgatory, I began the holy Mass which I was going to apply in a very special way for that good and dear Father to whom I have been attached with the most tender love for many years, whose first-born son I can glory in claiming to be. This new paternity he has formed with me only renders him more dear and worthy of all [p. 24] my respect and utter

dedication. What a delicious taste, what holy fervor it was to recite the prayers that the Church composed for the first part of the Mass, prayers of humility, purification and glorification full of the most sincere piety and heavenly doctrine. How much, O Lord, did you increase my soul's ardor when I offered you the bread and wine which were soon changed into the adorable Body and Blood of O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist]. You willingly accepted that offering I made together with your divine Son. You accepted it and heard the ardent prayer I directed to you to wipe out, in view of that spotless victim which was soon to descend on the altar, all my sins and grant the most abundant graces to all those present, and to all Christians living and dead. O God, the sacrifice I offered you was a thousand times sufficient to obtain all the favors I asked of you. You also accepted the offering I made of the chalice and my sincere wishes, addressed to you for my own salvation and that of all the world, ascended to you. The solemn moment was already approaching as I turned to those present for the last time to invite them to unite their prayers to mine and reminded them to lift their hearts to heaven since an entirely divine mystery was on the point of being enacted. How joyfully, fervently and gratefully did I pronounce the delightful words of the preface. Yes, Lord, it is truly just to continually offer you thanks, but especially today after J[esus] C[hrist], our Pascal Lamb, has been immolated. He is that true lamb who took away the sins of the world, who by dying destroyed the empire of death and in rising gave life to us all, etc. It is especially just that I offer you special thanks, O most powerful and adorable Lord, particularly on this day when, for the first time, carried away to the foot of your throne, I am going to offer your Majesty this holy, spotless victim who redeemed the world. I am going to offer myself with Him to your sovereign Grandeur and celebrate in your honor and for your glory the Passover most worthy of your infinite holiness. But suddenly those present could no longer hear my voice. The beseeching posture that I assumed, the silence that reigned around the altar, everything proclaimed that something of infinite magnitude was about to happen. Divine Jesus, how could I relive all the sentiments with which you filled my soul as I was reciting the touching, solemn words preceding the consecration, and after placing myself in direct communication with the heavenly citizens I felt the awe-inspiring moment near at hand. You alone, O God, know what was taking place in my soul when, through the mysterious words [p. 25], I called you down on the altar as a victim worthy to be presented to the eternal Father. Filled with fear and love, I hesitated, trembling, but finally the powerful words

came out of my mouth, a miracle of infinite love took place and you descended into my hands. All of us, together with those present, we profoundly adored you. May I have the good fortune to receive the grace I requested of you at that time, to die as a victim of charity in some public disaster or at least a victim of zeal in the exercise of the holy ministry entrusted to me; or rather, may the prayer I made at the elevation of your precious Blood be heard and some day may I have the happiness of shedding my blood for love of you and the holy religion of which you have constituted me a minister. O Jesus, adorable victim, what was my joy and the ravishment of my soul when, united with you in the most intimate manner, with my eyes fixed on the Eucharistic veils which hid you from sight, I prayed to your eternal Father. Oh how fervent were those prayers and at the same time I realized their full efficacy since they were offered by you. Angels were all around the altar, taking part in an attitude of deepest respect and myself, a weak creature, a sinful man, raised my hands to heaven and offered as one who sacrifices the divine victim whose immolation is of infinite value in the sight of the Eternal One. Time flew by in those supernatural and sanctifying moments. At last I took the holy victim in my hands ready to consume that sacred flesh which gives life to our souls. O my God! Who am I to take part in such a pure meal and to nourish myself with this immaculate Lamb? I am nothing but dust and ashes, a sinner, yet I fearlessly approached that divine banquet! No, my God! I am not worthy to have you come to live in me; I am a thousand times unworthy of such a favor and would never have dared to approach the holy altar but you yourself called me thereto. I trust that you will never abandon me to my weakness but will put the final touches to your goodwill. You have only to desire and the most fervent and worthy dispositions will be placed in me. Say only one word and my soul will be healed, *Domine non sum dignus*, etc. O divine Jesus, may your mercy be forever exalted. God of goodness, it is certainly true that you [p. 26] have given me today signs of the most tender love. Till now I have had the boundless joy of frequently sharing in your adorable sacrament, experienced the most special gifts from you and received the most consoling messages; but today you have placed the capstone on your mercy. Ah! Now I know clearly that you in your gifts and graces are infinite. Today, I myself took with my own hands the assurance of eternal life. I took that holy host which I had changed, through a miraculous power, into your adorable Body. I took the chalice of salvation and for the first time drank the precious Blood which redeemed the world. O my God! At that sacred moment I

sealed an eternal and absolute bond with you. Your adorable Blood was the proof of that alliance between my soul and you which will daily be renewed and become ever more intimate. O precious blood of the Saviour which once was shed on the cross for the world's salvation, you have now been mixed with my blood and will from now on flow in my veins. My blood will be that of God and I will be God ... Oh! abyss of majesty and love, it will be no longer I who live but Jesus will live in me. How could I ever be guilty of forgetting such great obligations contracted with my God. How could this mouth open in vanity or lies since it has been crimsoned in God's blood! Oh! No! Nothing unworthy will ever again proceed from it. From now on, it will bring forth words of life, charity, doctrine and the praise of God. But I hear a voice of supplication which, by humbly confessing its sins, begs me to distribute to all present the bread of life. Adorable Saviour, you thus place no limits to your blessings. Not only do you give yourself unreservedly to me, but you place yourself in my hands to do with you as I please, to distribute you to your family as heavenly food. Holy angels, look with astonishment: who could ever invent such a great marvel? An infinite love is needed to arrive at that point. Representing mankind's Saviour, I turn to those present and by my blessing call down on their souls the Lord's mercy. I hold the divine Lamb in my hands and distribute him to those who come forward, saying with heartfelt fervor: May the Body of O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist] preserve your soul for eternal life. O my God, what consolation and sentiments of love, faith, profound devotion and holy respect during the entire time of this heavenly distribution! Oh! my soul was truly on fire as I gave the bread of life to each person. [p. 27] How sincerely and ardently I desired that it be for everyone the assurance of eternal life!

Finally the holy sacrifice came to its conclusion. I recited the last prayer of the Mass with every sentiment of love and gratitude. For the first time I gave my blessing to those present and while they sang the thanksgiving hymn I placed on their heads and had them kiss the hands that had just held the adorable Body of O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist]. After calling down the most abundant graces on everyone, I came down from the holy altar and went out in the most profound silence and recollection...

I had no time to write down the resolutions.



**9 - Major retreat at Notre Dame du Laus, October 1835.<sup>27</sup>**

*The last end of man and the virtues of Jesus Christ. The conclusion of the retreat. Fervor. Graces received.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

J.M.J.

Beata solitudo, sola beatitudo [p. 1]

Lord, how I needed a retreat! What has become of the peace of mind and that sweet and tender piety to which you always drew me. What have I done with so many graces that you showered on me at the time of my ordination. What have I done with that priestly innocence with which you endowed my soul at that time? Lord, if I have not entirely lost it, I have certainly greatly compromised it. I have descended much lower than the high degree of fervor to which you had raised me. My poor soul, lacking recollection, a spirit of prayer and the charity to enflame it, is like a deserted, uncultivated piece of land. What a miserable state!

But not all is lost. Since arriving at Notre Dame du Laus, I have received many graces, many illusions have disappeared and light has several times shone in my soul to show me what I must do. This sanctuary has been a source of blessing for me. My tender mother, most sweet Mary who has already gained so much for me, to whom I owe all that I am, does not wish to limit there her proofs of love and kindness. It seems that she will grant me great favors during my stay here at her sanctuary, especially during this retreat. She has already given me to understand that I am not at all what God wants me to be. She has intimated to me how much I have been wrong, trusting in human resources and how much I have strayed, running with too much avidity after weak scientific elements, letting go of my faith life and the supernatural path that God wished me to follow. I feel that my soul is sick, weak, without the degree of charity that gives it life. I realize that it is in great need of purification before it can enter into communion with God. So I am happy to see these days of retreat and solitude arrive during which I can

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<sup>27</sup> Orig.: AGR, Casimir Aubert file, no. 4, E, 7 pages. From September 1835 to August 1836, Father Aubert, as Novice Master, lived at Notre Dame du Laus to where the novitiate had been transferred. He no doubt made this retreat with the novices who were few at that time.

be alone with God and seriously concentrate on my perfection, listen to whatever his divine Spirit wishes me to hear and thus begin a totally new way of life. I deeply hope that the Lord wishes to have mercy on me once again through the intercession of the holy and immaculate Virgin Mary. I have as though sensed in advance that this good God is going to shower me with favors again. So let us gladly enter this profound recollection and perfect silence which should set me apart from created things. May every foreign thought be far from my mind and may I form an interior dwelling where nothing but God may enter, or rather may I make my abode in some higher place, etc.

[p. 2] L.J.C. et M.I.

*First day.*

In the morning I was rather distracted by some exterior business matters which had to be looked after and I tasted very little the truths we had been given to consider or rather I wasn't able to go into them as deeply as I would have liked. However, the meditation on man's last end did sufficiently impress me. It seemed that up to now I have not really understood why God has created me. I did see God as the highest joy of his creature, and I did understand that it was a noble and lofty matter to have been made only for him. But I perceived an immense distance between God and man and I thought that nothing could be found to unite them. However, I understood with great joy that it was not so but that the distance could disappear since there was a link from one to the other which I saw to be love, the charity through which the Infinite bends down to the finite, God to man, and the latter reached up to God. That struck me deeply. It seemed that I saw these truths for the first time. I was especially convinced that up to then I had never truly loved.

Neither was I inspired as much as I would have liked to be by the goal of religious life, however I saw what a great grace was for me the vocation to the religious life especially for two reasons. God made me understand that I would not have persevered in grace after my conversion if I would have stayed in the world. Who knows what would have become of me then, into what abyss I would have cast myself? In a similar manner I saw, from what I now know of the dangers for secular priests, that I would have been a very poor subject if God had not, in his infinite kindness that I in no way merited, opened to me the holy asylum of religious life to find therein support equal to my weakness. It seems to me also that I will never be able to adequately express my grat-

itude to him. I renewed several resolutions I had taken at that time about this matter, especially the one to renew my vows every time I recite the Angelus, etc.

Today, besides the distractions that I was obliged to undergo, I began to feel more intimately the action of the Holy Spirit in my soul. For the time being, he led it mainly to a great desire to be purified, to be united sweetly to God. It seemed that he was preparing very precious graces for it and urging it on constantly to a very lively and heartfelt desire for true perfection. It seemed to me that if I don't profit from this retreat, I don't know what will become of me. How will I be able to return to the path on which God is leading me and renew the chain of graces that I have long since interrupted.

L.J.C. et M.I. 5th day. [p. 3]

The first meditation on the birth of O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist] impressed me to quite a degree. I attentively followed the diverse circumstances of this mystery with a gentle attraction. I felt compelled to ask the Blessed Virgin that she take special care to make me understand it. I reflected that it would be wise during the meditations on the mysteries of O[ur] L[ord] to beg his holy Mother to grant me this grace since she had entered into and understood them better, even a thousand times better, than any other angelic or human creature. It wasn't hard to love poverty after contemplating all that had happened in the stable at Bethlehem, but I didn't spend much time on it. I felt inspired by the thought and desire to have J[esus] C[hrist] live in me and from now on to be animated only by his divine life. The Holy Spirit strongly nudged me in this direction not only during meditation but in all the other exercises as well. I saw that as soon as I will have the life of our divine Lord in me, all the other virtues will follow, poverty among them, but put into practice in a much more excellent and perfect manner. One partic[ular] resolution that came to mind was to be satisfied with whatever helping would be given me at table without taking any more afterwards. I was very moved during Mass and received many consolations from God who gave me to see more clearly that it was from it that I must draw the life of J[esus] C[hrist] which would continually become more abundant in me in the measure that I would more and more unite myself to him in love. I realized also that I had never really celebrated Mass well up to then and that I was lacking especially in faith and charity.

While meditating on the flight into Egypt, I contemplated this mystery with delight and consolation but was continually inclined to union with O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist]. It seemed to me that if I succeeded in truly forming his divine life in me, I would win all and everything else would easily follow. Meditating on this matter, I came to understand how much I had been mistaken up to now in judging things of obedience with only the eyes of human wisdom. I was too free in judging, too lax in following the direction of superiors, and scarcely saw in the one who commanded more than the human aspect. I saw how much the spirit of J[esus] C[hrist], our d[ivine] Master, led to different sentiments, and that I would have to pay special attention to this matter.

L.J.C. et M.I. Seventh day. [p. 5]

The first meditation on the agony of O[ur] L[ord] in the garden of Olives made a rather strong impression on my soul. Seeing the divine Jesus in this state of victim was what touched me most; he was profoundly humbled before his Father and, what is even more, felt such deep sorrow in his soul, such as I could never fathom. I clearly saw there a mystery of suffering that I could not pierce but which however I could someday understand better if I would carefully purify my soul and start on the path of humiliation and suffering. I also clearly saw that up to now I have not entered into the meaning of these mysteries. It is true that I have often been touched deeply by them, even to shedding tears, but I saw nothing more than that, having no idea whatsoever of the true cause of that agony, at least nothing more than an ordinary idea. My mind did not understand at all the reason why O[ur] d[ivine] Saviour had to be reduced to such a state in the garden of Olives. This morning I seized something of it. It seemed that I was made to enter the soul of the Saviour, that I understood very well the cause of his sorrow. It was for the sins of the entire world that he rendered the bail. No longer did the bloody sweat which ran down all his members astonish me further since I saw in them only a faint indication of the interior torments which crucified his holy soul. Simultaneously, I understood what glory was rendered to the Holy Trinity by this agony of our dear Saviour. What I saw much more clearly was that up to now the sufferings had no effect on me. All that might have brought the suffering J[esus] C[hrist] to mind and unite me to him in that state had been a closed book to me. It seems then that I received a great grace. I felt myself being strongly attracted to loving the sufferings and interior pain which would continually place

me before God in a state of victim and make me love everything that would have me recall J[esus] C[hrist] suffering, the poor people, the unfortunate, people prey to bodily or interior sufferings. O dear Saviour, set me solidly in this path and never allow my infidelities to make me lose the great grace you have given me of sharing in your sufferings.

I was in good form during Mass, not however with any extraordinary feeling, but I was recollected, taken up with all I was doing, deeply savoring all the words coming from my lips. God! how happy I would be if I could always experience these dispositions at the altar and offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass in this way.

I don't really know how I felt during the second meditation on O[ur] L[ord's] sufferings in Jerusalem. My body was very tired and dull. I saw things as in a dream instead of in a meditation. Towards the end, I started to get into it and tried to make up for it afterwards. Then I was inclined to linger on three main points: O[ur] L[ord] at the home of Caiphas during the night, later at the home of Herod, and finally the flagellation and crowning with thorns at Pilate's residence. I didn't have [p. 6] the time to be strongly moved but what I hadn't experienced before was a certain pleasure I felt in contemplating O[ur] d[ivine] Saviour in this painful and humiliating circumstance. My soul felt at peace and content to be at dear Jesus' side. At the same time I understood that I was in the presence of an incomprehensible abyss, an inexhaustible subject of contemplation for me from which I shall be able to glean abundant fruit. After that, I was deeply attracted to follow O[ur] S[aviour] on this path of suffering and humiliation. It even seemed that I would find satisfaction in it, at least I understood that I could not be united to O[ur] d[ivine] Master in any other way. I wouldn't know how to express those things which went on in my soul. It was like rather striking ideas, succeeding one another, like lightning which made me discover all that. Those thoughts and feelings became stronger during the exercise of the *Via crucis* which we made on the great hill at the Calvary, during which I received the grace to make it in bare feet. Oh! I ardently begged O[ur] good master that he give me love of suffering. Nevertheless, I was content and even strongly desired to suffer even more. O my God! With what graces you overwhelmed my poor soul. I don't know what all that means, but at least, Lord, that I may not abuse them or ever again be unfaithful to you.

I was more forcefully struck in the third medi[tation] on the sufferings of O[ur] S[aviour] on Calvary than during the others and the impression even lasted a long time afterwards. All the while that I was making these ordinary reflections on the horrible sufferings of O[ur] d[ivine] Saviour, I nevertheless understood very well that I still did not perceive anything at all and it seemed to me once more that I was faced with an incomprehensible abyss. Again I felt strongly attracted to sufferings and humiliations seeing them as intimately linked to my priestly quality. I saw that I had never understood the priesthood in this way before and now clearly saw that I was a priest only through and for the passion of J[esus] C[hrist], our God. The passion is found at Mass, in confession, in all the sacraments. It seemed that the adorable Jesus spoke to me from the cross on high: my son, from now on you want to live with my very own life, you ask that I live in your soul, etc., but do you know what you are saying, do you understand the extent of your prayer? I can live in my chosen ones only through the cross, I communicate nothing but a life of self-abnegation and suffering to them. Such a life is what suits my children during their time on earth. They must necessarily pass by this way before sharing in the life of glory that I will communicate to them in heaven. It is especially with such a life that I wish to animate my priests; O dear son, you are a priest and still haven't understood that truth. I am letting you see it today so do not lose this grace which will lead you far. As for myself, I adored this d[ivine] Saviour while he was speaking to me in that way. I thanked him for his goodness and deeply humbled myself for not having better understood his teaching. It seemed that I understood it well now and that it appeared easy and light but at the same time saw that it would not always be thus, that human nature would rebel against its practice. This led to great feelings of mistrust. O my God! May I be faithful to so many graces and never again be ungrateful.

L.J.C. et M.I. Eighth day [p. 7]

I was not greatly moved by the first meditation on the resurrection of O[ur] L[ord]. I pondered the various moments of this mystery with pleasure but was not struck by any of them in particular. What made a deeper impression were the qualities of the glorious body of O[ur] L[ord] J[esus] C[hrist] which I applied to the spiritual resurrection of my soul. I clearly saw how deplorable it would be if I did not persevere in the good dispositions formed in me by God's grace and that it was a capital importance for me, and if I had that misfortune it would mean

being immensely ungrateful to God for which I would deserve to be terribly punished. Likewise, I saw how I should form my soul according to the other qualities of the divine Saviour's glorious body. From now on I must be impassible, that is, indifferent to every external thing so that they don't lead me in any way into dissipation, irresponsibility, etc., unaffected by contradictions, sufferings, humiliations, so that nothing in the world may trouble my heart nor diminish in me the fullness of the life of J[esus] C[hrist], my dear Master. From here on I must be endowed with great agility, that is, great fervor in God's service, joyfully and promptly involving myself in everything, always ready to go wherever God calls me, following the path of obedience at the first sound of the bell. Above all, I must bring this spiritual agility to all of my conduct, allowing myself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, abandoning myself into his hands like a docile instrument to faithfully carry out whatever his grace inspires in me. From now on I must share in the subtleness of the risen body of O[ur] L[ord] in the sense that I be lifted up in spirit beyond earthly goods, and live as if I were already in heaven, always breaking myself more and more from the bonds of the flesh and the miseries of human nature. *Si consurrexistis cum Christo... quae sursum sunt sapite*, etc. [Col. 3,1]. I also understood that Jesus Christ, who is to live in me, had also to communicate his risen life to me, without which there would be something lacking to the fullness of this divine life. I even understood that Mass is where this divine life is taken as at its source. Even though it is especially under the aspect of his humiliations and passion that J[esus] C[hrist] our Saviour honors the Holy Trinity nevertheless J[esus] C[hrist] is there as risen, and we renew the memory of that mystery since the resurrection is mentioned several times. But, what particularly struck me in this meditation and continues to the present is the need to persevere in the sentiments and dispositions that God placed in me through his grace during this retreat. That is what was most deeply engraved in my heart which I cannot forget. I even felt myself strongly inclined to beg God that he let me die if he foresees that I would be again unfaithful. I said Mass with this attitude, *pro postulanda gratia bene moriendi*, continually asking God to cede to my request. Things seemed to go very well for me during this holy exercise, It is true that I didn't experience anything exceptional but remained in quiet peace and recollection, fervently and joyfully following all the prayers and ceremonies I was performing. During thanksgiving I was rather moved and even strongly struck by most of the thoughts and sentiments I have just expressed in regard to my fidelity for the future [p. 8].

In the second meditation on God's love, I was more deeply inspired than in the one of this morning, at least as concerns the senses. It was a pleasure to reflect on the kindness of this God of grandeur and glory and I considered myself fortunate that God had wished to give me such a full awareness of this truth. But what struck me most was that, casting a glance on my entire life, I saw with what care God had set out to attract me ever more to him through love as he had already wished to possess my heart from my tenderest years and I, ungrateful and unfaithful, had eluded this kindness.

**10 - Another conclusion of a retreat made at Notre-Dame du Laus.**  
[1835]<sup>28</sup>

[p. 27] Here I am at the end of my retreat, ready to take up my regular duties. It is extremely important for me not to risk losing in any way the fruit of so many graces. Let us attempt to set out here the dispositions that the Lord deigned to place in my soul. If I am ever tempted to forget the promises I have made him, may these lines be a protestation against my ingratitude and suffice to redirect me to the way of perfection if I ever have the misfortune to wander from it.

O God! Why are you so kind and merciful to your poor creature? Wasn't it enough that you filled me with your favors ever since I have had the good fortune to live in the haven of religious life? In some way, you wanted to even improve on your gifts at the moment when the anointing joined me forever to the priesthood of J[esus] C[hrist], the eternal priest. You flooded my soul at that time with a torrent, a river, an ocean of blessings. And when I should have been expecting nothing more than terrible punishment for the culpable forgetting of so many graces, you have ceaselessly pursued me to draw me back to you, to this very moment when you are waiting for me so as to almost force me to break my chains and return to the ways of love and generosity. O Lord, how kind you have been and how ungrateful have I been! Now I see how much I have strayed following a path which did not lead to life and I see

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<sup>28</sup> Orig.: AGR, Casimir Aubert file, no. 4, D, 32 pages. An undated text. According to the context these pages seem to have been written a little after the retreat of October 1835, a few years after ordination, in a moment of fervor. Father Aubert went only once to Notre Dame du Laus for a few days of rest in the summer of 1838 (*Oblate Writings*, 9, p. 97, note 43).



what a great distance I have separated myself from that high point, almost without realizing it, to which you had raised me at my priestly ordination. I see that I have through my fault lost the secret of the ineffable mysteries to which my soul had begun to be initiated. I realize that I had no idea of what I was, of the priesthood and its sublime attributes. Running after human interests, my soul became too attached to the study of natural sciences, stressing too much the weak elements of profane knowledge, thus little by little distancing itself from you and [p. 28] depriving itself of divine lights of heavenly wisdom. From then on it comprehended almost nothing of the communications of your divine Spirit in prayer. Always occupied with outside interests, obsessed with a thousand preoccupations, it was never free to take flight into the sublime contemplation of heavenly things. Continually held back by a thousand bonds, it could no longer penetrate divine truths. That hidden mine, that delicious nourishment of prayer did not give it life. Thus languishing, without strength or energy, most often guided by a totally natural light, it vegetated rather than flourished. Ah! My heart especially was lacking nourishment. It nevertheless had a great need to love but was not loving ardently or giving itself to you, O my God. How could it live like that, what was hindering the fire of divine charity from coming to consume it? I don't really know, but what seems very certain to me is that it was not burning for you enough, O Lord, and that up to now I have not understood your heavenly love. Nevertheless, I was not lacking anything, holy Mass, wasn't it alone enough to keep the flames of charity alive in my heart? But I didn't understand holy Mass either. It is true that I ordinarily spent a good deal of time in preparing to celebrate it well and I believe even to actually doing it well. But today I see that I was mistaken and only skimmed the surface of the grandeur, the profundity and the divine in that august sacrifice. I only had an inkling of what should have been penetrated in the most intimate manner. My faith in the holy mysteries (ordinarily) was not a lively, penetrating faith which gives a more perfect understanding than if one sees only with human sight. My charity especially did not even merit the name, being only a shadow of the charity which consumes God and reigns in the heart of all his true children. O Jesus, my Saviour, what I still did not understand either is that divine life with which the priest is to be animated, that life which has its source in your very heart, which forms a most intimate bond between you and your child, that life of total union which makes human nature disappear to give way to grace, so that in the priest the life of the old Adam lives no more but only that of the heav-

only man. I didn't understand the whole area of prayer any better nor rather was it practiced any better. The divine office didn't touch my heart or nourish my soul. I made only superficial examinations of conscience which resulted in no amendment in my conduct. Spiritual reading and holy scripture enlightened sometimes, struck my mind but nothing more. In the midst of this negligence and this state of torpor, what ever became of recollection?

# 11 - Report [of the Director of scholastics at Le Calvaire in Marseilles], April 20, 1834.<sup>29</sup>

*The situation regarding "Oblates" (scholastics) from the spring of 1833 to April 20, 1834. What Bishop de Mazenod expected of Father Aubert when he named him Director of Oblates: form them in religious life and direct their studies. The number of Oblates in April 1833. Difficulties encountered: the young age of the Director, the Founder's absence, illness, etc. A plan for direction. Efforts to promote piety and intensify studies. Hopes for the Congregation's future.*

L.J.C. et M.I. [p. 1]

It will soon be a year since o[ur] v[ery] R[everend] F[ather] Gen[eral] entrusted me with the important duty which I am carrying out in our community at Le Calvaire. The occasion naturally presents itself for me to give an account of my stewardship and examine to some extent where we are at in this matter. It's true that I have not failed to pose myself the same question before. Not only during every monthly retreat did I try to judge the state of my supervision, but I can say that my principal occupation was habitually to search for the causes which might oppose the good I wanted to accomplish and to apply an immediate remedy when the evil was discovered. My full attention focused on the development both of the community as a whole and of the individual members. Since I have never written anything about those things,

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<sup>29</sup> Orig.: AGR, Marseilles file, Calvaire: noviciate. Casimir was made Novice Master shortly after his priestly ordination on April 6, 1833. He signed the Register of Entries into the noviciate from June 1, 1833 to February 21, 1841. According to this Report, he had also been appointed Director of the Scholastics who resided at Le Calvaire and followed the courses given at the Major Seminary. From the autumn of 1835, they stayed at the Major Seminary itself. This Report deals only with the scholastics.

realizing however that it is necessary<sup>30</sup> to have something down on paper to refer to in time of need, I think it would be useful here to make a kind of recapitulation, a sort of summary of the whole year's observations, to start from the beginning, recalling what had to be done, and continuing from there up to the present moment, taking care in this review to note the progress, obstacles, what was done, what ought to have been done, and finally the situation in which we find ourselves at the end of this first year, as well as what can be done from now on, the direction to be taken and the hopes we can entertain.

When o[ur] v[ery] R[everend] Sup[erior] G[eneral] made me the director of our young members, I think I understood very well the task imposed on me and what approach I had to take to assure success in this important work. Form them in religious life, develop more and solidify their virtues, direct them at the same time in their studies to make sure they would profit from them and acquire the knowledge to make of them learned men. Such was the goal I set for myself according to the instructions communicated to me by o[ur] v[ery] R[everend] S[uperior] Gen[eral].

Having just been elevated to the heights of the priesthood, still completely filled with that first fervour inspired by the holy anointing and the intimate exchanges between the priest and the spotless victim who saved the world, I set to work with that confidence born of the assurance of being well supported, with a pure intention and the naivete of inexperience. There were eleven members in the community entrusted to me, four priests and seven Oblates.<sup>31</sup> Soon after, two of the latter were elevated to the priesthood. In general, I found them all well

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<sup>30</sup> "From all these observations," is written above: "to have something down on paper." Casimir must have reread this text later; he made several corrections which we followed here without indicating the original first text in a footnote.

<sup>31</sup> In April 1833, the four priests were Toussaint Dassy, Marcellin Grogard, Jacques Eymar and Joseph Sicard; the Brothers: André Pélissier, ordained priest on April 6, 1833, Jérôme Gignoux, ordained on June 2, Pierre Aubert, brother of Casimir, Calixte Kotterer, Valentin Renyard, Etienne Semeria and Jean-Joseph Magnan. From April 1833 to April 1834, three novices made their oblation: Etienne Rolleri, Jean-Joseph De Veronico and Nicolas Bise; nine postulants began their novitiate: François Hermitte, priest, J. Ambroise Vincens, priest, F.X. Joseph Bermond, Paul Moro, Sébastien Wutz, François Panizzi, Louis Berganin, Augustin Ramirez and Urbain Payras. We have on hand the report that Father Aubert made on each of these novices in 1834. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-79. On page [2]

disposed to accept o[ur] dear Father's viewpoint and ready to support me in all that I could do for their advancement. But obstacles did exist which were such as to partly paralyse my efforts and hinder the worthwhile effects of their good will.

Since I had spent several years with most of these young people as an equal, it was rather difficult [p. 2] for me to take an attitude of superiority in their regard, made much more difficult by my extreme youth which made me regard myself as not in any way superior to several of them in some aspects. There were also obstacles from their side. These young men didn't always receive, especially on a spiritual plane, all the care one could have given them. They already had their own way of doing things and a kind of virtue with which they seemed to be content, so that it wasn't easy either to change their minds or reform their conduct. When I thought about this difficulty on several occasions, it seemed to me that, in spite of the good dispositions of these young men, I would have preferred to work on entirely new ground.

From the beginning, I had some notion of these above-mentioned obstacles but it wasn't until after the first months that I fully perceived them. Everything seemed easy at the beginning and, I must say, in my naive confidence, I had thought to obtain greater results at the end of the year than we actually did. Even though I was rather occupied during the first two months with the classes I was giving at the seminary,<sup>32</sup> I did, however, get a rather good start with the instructions I was giving to our brothers. I showed a great deal of zeal for the work I had just undertaken, for and with them. I showed a very lively interest in them and after having thus gained their confidence, I tried to have them assimilate the views of o[ur] S[uperior] G[eneral] through all I told them of the need for becoming good religious and learned men. Knowledge and piety has always been my motto and the goal I pointed out to them as the only one worthy of their total effort. In our meetings together, I

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Casimir says that during the course of this first year of direction he had not obtained the hoped-for results. A long-range view gives no more brilliant results either: only three of the nine novices persevered in the Congregation and four of the fourteen Oblates; three others, however, left later when well on in years, after having rendered numerous services: Fathers Dassy, Magnan and Bise.

<sup>32</sup> Casimir, still a scholastic, was dogma professor at the seminary in the 1832-1833 school year.

always tried to keep them spellbound and ceaselessly proposed to them reasons for fervour, to instruct them and remind them of things they had possibly forgotten to some degree. Through individual contacts I had with them it did not take me long to notice how much they needed to be trained, especially in the interior life. Very few understood much about it. Meditation was a spiritual exercise for them which consisted in some considerations and self-examination, but once the hour of this exercise was completed, they didn't hardly ever think of it again. Besides that there was very little habitual recollection, very little union with God, an entirely natural virtue and a rather lax way of living with almost no effort or self-denial. I also attempted to show them how such virtue was insufficient and what had to be done to remedy all these defects. Based on that, I formulated a plan of direction which I followed rather closely in practice. Here it is as I usually followed it.

After invoking the Holy Spirit, I started by asking the one whose turn it was, about the dispositions in which he found himself since the last time [p. 3], if he always sincerely wanted to profit by the present opportunity to work effectively for his perfection, if there were days when he noticed that his ardour seemed to have diminished? What impressions had ordinarily dominated his soul? Joy, satisfaction, or even sadness and sorrow? Did he find himself happy with his situation, if this semi-retreat, far from being a burden to him, seemed rather a grace, a gift that God had arranged for him for the good of his soul.

When we had discussed these questions and I had rectified whatever was called for by the occasion, I went into the exercises in detail. How did he make meditation? What topics did he prefer? What reflections, what feelings? Did distractions come to trouble him, their nature? Did they arise from a too strong impression made on him by some object, some study, etc., or did they rather come from a natural mental distraction? What subject did he take for meditation? What resolutions were taken at the end and what dispositions did he finish with, and whether the impressions that he had received during times of recollection etc. remained with him for the rest of the day? It is impossible that therein there were not some points that needed changing, some advancement to be made.

In the same way, I went over the other daily exercises, especially those of piety, not however using the same questions at once for all the exercises, which would have been interminable, but each time I stopped

on one in particular following whatever was demanded by the needs of the one I was dealing with at the moment.

After that we went into detail on study. What were they studying? How much time was spent on it during the day? What means were taken to assure that some good resulted? What attitude inspired them? Which topics of these studies did they prefer? Concerning which there was always something to rectify, some advice to offer, whether on the manner itself of studying or on the spirit in which it was to be undertaken and the precautions to be taken so that study would not be detrimental to piety. If time allowed, I also reviewed recreation periods, meals and walks, the care given to do these exercises well.

During these personal relationships, I was always concerned about becoming fully acquainted with these young people entrusted to me, in regard to their characters, virtues and talents in order to gauge accordingly my advice and entire direction. My main focus was to correct faults that I recognized as coming from each particular character and I concentrated especially on those defects. I also attempted to give to their virtue something especially masculine<sup>33</sup> and solid, teaching them to base it, not on impressions but on principles suggested by faith, and to place it all on a firm and generous determination to belong to God, and completely to renounce themselves. [p. 4]

I never sent them away without having shared my remarks with them concerning their defects and what I expected of each of them individually. I was always careful to season everything with charitable and kind expressions so that they would leave the interview better disposed than ever to meticulously carry out their duties.

From the very first weeks the impetus was given and everyone was eager to begin the route traced out for him. In spite of the youthfulness of the Father Director, his authority was established. He commanded the respect and confidence of those young men. They always received his advice with docility. Improvements he suggested were gladly adopted

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<sup>33</sup> Bishop de Mazenod used this expression when he talked about the life of sacrifice and generosity that had to be proposed to the scholastics. "In short, a virile, religious but paternal formation. Such is the method I followed in the beginning when I was myself in charge of training our members." (Mazenod to Father Mouchette, July 9, 1853, in *Oblate Writings*, 11, p. 146).

and one could see that each one was working seriously at his own formation and contributing to community edification.

Things went along like that for several months and, in spite of a few incidents and lax moments, one could only be satisfied with the general direction of the community. The departure of o[ur] R[everend] Sup[erior] G[eneral] for Rome<sup>34</sup> was like the beginning of a new era. Deprived of the frequent conversations I had with him from which I drew the strength and the guidance I needed, I then felt that something was lacking in myself; not that my will to work diligently at the task assigned me had weakened but I somehow did not have the same ardour, not knowing to what it could be attributed.

On the other hand, a few minor illnesses which struck several of our young men disturbed the order of the whole community. I was obliged to suspend lessons. Even common exercises, less attended, suffered from it and the routine we had established at the beginning slowed down notably, even though nothing of great importance was given up nor was there any marked disorder. And even in the meetings we had together, I tried to support our brothers in their good sentiments and point out the least obstacles that could get in their way. Thus was spent part of autumn until the annual retreat which was preceded by a few days of holiday. I must say that I was satisfied with the manner in which each one applied himself to spiritual exercises. From the first day there was a total change, most perfect silence, extraordinary recollection, with everyone showing great faithfulness to the exercises. It was evident that each one was seriously going about his business, that deep thoughts occupied everyone's mind and that everything that took place was making a very noticeable impression on their souls. Everyone came out of it better disposed than ever, even those of whom I could have previously complained had the same sentiments as the others and had taken effective resolutions. [p. 5]

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<sup>34</sup> Upset with the episcopal appointment of Eugene de Mazenod without its consent, the Government asked the Pope to recall the Bishop to Rome and station him outside of France. Without knowing the reason for which Gregory XVI wanted to see him as soon as possible, the Founder left at the beginning of August 1833, not without "a heavy heart," and without knowing what awaited him (Mazenod to Tempier, August 8, 1833, in *Oblate Writings*, 8, p. 86. It took four months for him to clear himself of the false accusations of political activity and obtain the Pope's permission to return to France to be able to defend himself on the spot.

The Director, ever imbued with the importance of his duties, made an effort to support these good dispositions he found in our young men. He gave them the most fitting advice, warning them of the obstacles they would meet and especially of their own natural instability. However, many things happened to hinder the community from profiting fully from the fruits of the retreat. First of all, there was a sudden notable decrease in the number of those in community, with the departure of Fathers Pélissier and Gignoux, Father Dassy's illness,<sup>35</sup> which not only deprived us of his presence but disrupted almost the whole community either because of the care he needed by several who shared the work as well as by the sadness of his dangerous state which penetrated the hearts of all his brothers. Last of all, the new duties caused by this situation fell on the person who was supposed to have only one thing to do. He had to carry out the work entrusted to him by the Congregation, take his turn at evening prayers in the church, etc. Thus, even though he had the same good will as before, he had to admit that he was somewhat less in the care that he had given our young men up to that time. He did not gather them together as often and did not apply himself to accompany them as faithfully as he had before. It was impossible for the community not to feel this or that everything would go ahead as if there was no disruption. Even though there was no disorder nor noticeable lack of good, it was not difficult to see that the same ardour was not present nor the same elan of spirit. After that, we always felt more or less this sort of recess. It is true that things improved during Lent and one must admit that this holy season was spent in an edifying manner, especially the final days of Holy Week. But in the midst of all that, it seemed to me that there was always something missing. I mean that ardour which had animated everyone in the first days that the Director of the community took up this duty entrusted to him.

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<sup>35</sup> According to Father Marius Devès, author of Father Dassy's biography (Paris, 1938, p. 47), Dassy, ordained to the priesthood in Switzerland on December 17, 1831, had remained there as a missionary. It's there that he must have fallen ill and then returned to Marseilles in March 1834. But according to what Casimir Aubert wrote here [pp. 5 and 6] Father Dassy must have spent the 1833-1834 school year at the Calvaire, under the scholastics' program since Bishop de Mazenod was unhappy with him and the Fathers who stayed in Switzerland after 1832 (Cf. *Oblate Writings*, 8, pp. 84-85).



Now, what progress did our young men make? What did they gain? First of all, in regard to virtue.

We must first speak of the priests who are no longer in the community, now sent into various houses. Two of them gained very little, Father Gignoux due to his very unique mindset and Father Pélissier due to an aspect of his almost apathetic character, somewhat inclined to originality also. Besides, they had been already formed for too long a time. Their habits were too ingrained for them to be able to transform their way of acting and set them in a different mold.

Fathers Dassy and Marcellin profited more from it and this semi-retreat to which they were held has been very useful for them. The first learnt how to control his extremely lively and flitting imagination. He increased in love for the virtues which are the foundation of religious life and accustomed himself to carry out his good resolutions more [p. 6] consistently and faithfully. He practiced recollection and mortification which he understood to be the only efficacious remedy for the wandering inclinations of his character. Father Marcellin, still only little formed in religious life, truly needed such an experience to acquire what he was lacking. He adapted fairly well to the peaceful, hidden life led within a community. He learnt something about recollection and modesty; he learnt that it was virtuous to practice them and especially he greatly corrected himself in regard to his great pretension and self-love.

As for those who have remained, there has also been progress and improvement. First, I think that they have been fairly well cleansed of the spirit of independence which had been more or less evident in each of them. There seems to be also something more serious and manly in their characters which was not always present before. They are solidly based on the fundamental aspects of religious life; they sufficiently love silence, regularity, retreat and solitude, keeping to their cells is not a great burden. Everyone goes about his duties and applies himself to his own affairs without thinking of bothering his brothers. They are docile and I can't cite a single instance where I found them ill-disposed to the advice I gave them. Charity and cordiality unite them; their attachment to the family is truly sincere. That does not apply to everyone in the same way. Magnan and Semeria undoubtedly hold first place by their regularity and goodness of character, following whom are Pierre and this year's Oblates who possess good character and positive dispositions

but are not yet formed, especially Brother Rolleri as well as the two others.<sup>36</sup>

Bro[ther] Reynaud, a basically good character also, does not seem to have gained as much, not due to lack of good will but to all the sufferings inflicted on him by his family's misfortunes. It is true that he has overcome his little conceit and corrected several other defects but he still remains a little bit too stubborn in his ideas and lacks polished manners. Of all of them, Bro[ther] Kotterer remains the one who still has the most work to do on his character. Nevertheless, to be fair to him, he has made efforts to progress and has gained in many areas. I thus feel that he has overcome all his vain pretensions, especially over the last while. He has taken it to heart to form himself in the practice of religious life, loves silence and solitude to some degree since he likes work, but in him it isn't based on anything supernatural. He tends to be dissipated, critical and still little formed in true piety.

I forgot to mention the two priests still with us. As regards Father Eymar, it is hard to say how much progress he has made. He is so mixed up that one can scarcely figure anything out about him. I think he is basically good and seems well disposed in regard to his duties but there is something special about his character which is difficult to correct and his tastes and manners are totally abnormal. [p. 7]

F[ather] Sicard is the last. The latter needed to change his manner of thinking and the bent of character more than his way of carrying out obligations. He always loved silence, solitude, regularity and never had to be prompted in matters of piety, but his melancholic character, somewhat inclined to mistrust, his excessively timid and meticulous conscience, so ill-formed besides, led to certain circumstances where he doubted some unquestionable duties. There were so many points one could [not] help but condemn. I think that recently he has improved in these different aspects, has forsaken his way of seeing things so as to accept saner ideas, and in spite of the repugnance he felt in practice, has been firmly resolved to take a different path, especially to renounce himself entirely.

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<sup>36</sup> Two others, that is, Brothers Reynaud and Kotterer.

Coming now to studies. Here also the priests profited the least from what we attempted in this regard. In literature class, either because they found it repugnant to submit to criticism from their younger brothers or for some completely other reason, they were never enthusiastic and the time that was spent in it, except for learning some rules of composition and good taste as well as the knowledge they acquired of defects in these areas, that time, I say, could have been spent a little more usefully. They learnt very little more in physics class. It's true that they applied themselves with some interest, however due to ineptitude in some, apathy in others, they didn't take up this study with sufficient enthusiasm.

It was different for the Oblates. They took the algebra and geometry that is taught in elementary school and they will always retain enough to be able to talk of these matters without being laughed at by young people of their age who have studied in colleges. As for physics class, with the exception of one or two, they followed it faithfully from the first lessons to the last. They always showed the same interest and, in it more than in the others, were as least as strong as college students. In general, they showed good dispositions for the literature class and if they haven't profited very much from it up to now, I think it can be attributed to the multiplicity of their occupations which hasn't allowed them to apply themselves as much as they would have liked, as well as to some degree the manner in which the class was carried out. [p. 8]

From all that has just been set forth and from the state in which things now stand, one can conclude, without foretelling a brilliant future for these young men, to reasonable hopes for the Society which they will someday strengthen if they have the time to form themselves adequately. One can also deduce from it what approach should be taken from now on so that they arrive at this goal.

To begin with, it is evident that, given the small number of these young men, it is hardly possible to make plans on a big scale and a vast plane. It is much better to restrain oneself at the beginning than to extend oneself too much. It is better to limit oneself to the most urgent matters and be well founded in them. Thus, in regard to studies it seems that what must be considered in a unique manner for our young Oblates is to train them in theology and preaching, forming men capable of fruitfully fulfilling their ministry of hearing confessions and worthily announcing God's word which is why it is essential to mold them in composition and help them by all possible means to acquire whatever

they are almost all still lacking in this regard. They absolutely need a literature class, but truly a class in which one faithfully follows a plan and these young men must really expend their energy. Since they still have some tracts to see in moral theology, it would be rather urgent to make it one of the main subjects of their studies.

To complete studies in the sciences, at least to instruct them in whatever would be embarrassing to be ignorant of in these matters, during vacation time, we could give them some lessons in the various branches of natural history, chemistry and astronomy so that they have as much knowledge in these matters as anyone who has made serious studies. After that, while having them continue with composition and theology, we could have them learn, at least the younger ones, some living language. Thus the Italians could improve in their mother tongue.

As for piety, I think that we have only to continue the work already begun, help them to acquire what they are lacking in the interior life, form them in recollection and union with God, in a word, in supernatural life. It would also be useful to insist on some other points no less essential in which they still have much to acquire. Thus what could be proposed along those lines is to bring them to deeply love community life, silence, religious practices and all [p. 9] that constitutes regularity, as their element, outside of which they would feel ill-at-ease and ardently wish to return to it as soon as possible. They still have to be formed in obedience, but perfect obedience, indifferent to everything, seeing themselves as only instruments that one can use for whatever work is assigned as suitable to them, so that they apply themselves to whatever is asked of them without their being in the least worried about it. To sum it all up, what we must do is to inspire in them a great spirit of self-sacrifice, total abandonment of their little interests, complete self-denial, with a limitless attachment to the family and an ardent desire to do everything useful to it and to serve it as a worthy son.

If we follow this plan and these ideas become reality, we can hope that these young men, formed in this manner and thereafter dispersed to the various houses of the Society, will be able to exercise a salutary influence as long as they are supported in their good dispositions by the immediate superiors. If things continue in this way we can promise ourselves that, by forming in like manner the young Oblates who come later and once these new recruits have been dispersed as reinforcements through the Society, in a few years we will notice a remarkable change

and evident progress. That would be the only way to leave our childhood, expand and flower a little more, preparing a future for ourselves at last.

L.J.C. et M.I.

Marseilles, April 20, 1834.

**12 - Excerpts from History of the house of Penzance, [Cornwall]<sup>37</sup>  
[1834-1844].<sup>38</sup>**

*Account of the foundation and events during the first year of the Oblate presence.*

The foundation of our Society's establishment in England is mark[ed] by such striking events that undoubtedly everything took place through a special plan of divine Providence.

It is true that we had the idea of establishing ourselves in England, but the accomplishment had necessarily been put off for a distant future when, after several year[s], we would have sufficient men from the country itself to make this foundation.

When, through an extraordinary concurrence of circumstances, Reverend Father Aub[ert] was led to Dublin where Father Daly already was and, contrary to all probability, had already received permission from our most r[everend] Father General to stay there, our vision was turned to Ireland only and it was there that we had the intention to first take root. But due either to polit[ical] unrest or other reasons,<sup>39</sup> all of our efforts regarding Ireland have been useless up to now. Having other plans, God permitted that, due to our incertitude in regard to the success of our efforts in establishing ourselves in Ireland, we accede to the proposal of Mr. Young of Dublin to accept the mission of Penzance in the western region of England which had been entrusted to him. This zeal-

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<sup>37</sup> Orig.: AGR: Casimir Aubert file, no. 5. This narration is given on pages 1, 5, 11-15, etc. of a notebook already partially filled with instruction notes for the novitiate program.

<sup>38</sup> Father Aubert seems to have written this text after his return to France in February 1844.

<sup>39</sup> The Irish Bishops looked askance at Congregations which too much escaped their authority.

ous and dedicated priest was then busy trying to amass funds to complete the beautiful church he had been building at Penzance for more than a year. The exalted notion he gave us of this mission's importance, the well-founded hope for the good we could do there, the state of abandonment in which the Catholics and Protestants of the whole county of Cornwall found themselves, the establishment of several missions of which Penzance could be the centre and general headquarters and finally, the promise to help us in the spiritual direction of this work and especially in the expenses incurred to complete the church and build a rectory, all of these combined arguments convinced our Superior General that we should accept this establishment.

So Father Daly got ready to come at the beginning of December 1842, but several unforeseen [p. 5] obstacles came up when he was about to do so. The church was not finished, far from it. The Vicar General of Doctor Baines, the bishop of the district, had written to Father Young not to accept the services of our Congregation,<sup>40</sup> so it seemed that everything was brought to a standstill and humanly speaking there was hardly any hope. It was then that Father Aubert, who was in southern Ireland at the Youghal College where he had settled to work on his plan to set up our Congregation at Cork, went to Dublin where, after discussing with Father Daly, continued on to Bristol so as to personally negotiate the transaction of Penzance with the Apostolic Vicar living at Prior Park. In this meeting, explanations were given from both sides which resulted in the possibility of Father Daly coming immediately to Penzance to look after the mission and, after several months of experiment, we could definitively settle in and make the more fitting arrangements.

On his way back to Ireland, Father Aubert went through Penzance to get in touch with Mister Young and inform him of what had just been arranged with the Reverend Doctor Baines and to discuss with him the most apt means to bring this newborn enterprise further along. Father Daly thus left Dublin to go to Penzance where he arrived with a lay

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<sup>40</sup> Bishop Baines didn't trust religious, deceived as he was by the Rosminians who, after recruiting several men from his Vicariate, went to establish themselves in the Central district of England, cf. V. Denny OMI, *Reaching Out*, 1991, p. 27.

brother<sup>41</sup> towards the middle of January 1843. Mister Young then returned to Dublin to continue collecting money. In this way, the Penzance mission started with very humble beginnings and the mission itself was very poor at that time. The church was only half-finished, a small house had to be rented, and there were no furnishings nor income to live on. So they had to struggle against many obstacles and suffer many privations. Since the chapel in the parlour of the small house was not big enough to hold the Catholics on Sunday, they decided to get together in the wood shop of Mister Hosking, the carpenter for the church. It was there that, after the place had been arranged in a less repulsive manner and a provisional altar had been set up the evening before, Sunday gatherings were held, twice a day, in the morning for Mass and in the afternoon for Vespers. Father Daly preached for each exercise and tried to make them as attractive as possible.

[p. 11] Nevertheless, in spite of the poverty of the provisional chapel, the exercises were eagerly followed by a certain number of Protestants, either drawn by curiosity or [by a] certain desire to become familiar with the truths of the Catholic religion. Soon the attendance became more numerous and the shop-turned-chapel was too small. Soon also the effects of divine grace made themselves felt in some well disposed people and in the first weeks of Lent, in March 1843, Father Daly publicly received the profession of faith of two Methodist Protestants, a young woman and a young man, a tailor by profession.

At about the same time, our Congregation was giving a fine example of its spirit of sacrifice and detachment. Father Young, embarrassed because of the debts already weighing on the church, would have soon been forced to suspend work needed to carry on with construction and would no longer have been able to deal with all the urgent expenses, especially that of the wood needed for the framing of the ceiling, the cost estimate of which was going up to three hundred Pounds sterling. In this embarrassing situation, Father Aub[ert] wrote to o[ur] Most R[everend] F[ather] Gen[eral], informing him of the state of affairs and strongly requested that the Society come to the help of the mission at

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<sup>41</sup> This was a postulant; there were still no Oblate Brothers in England in 1843. Father Aubert arrived in Penzance with a Brother postulant a little before Easter, v. *infra*, [p. 12].

Penzance. The reply was not long in coming. In spite of the meagre funds in the general account, the three hundred Pounds, borrowed from the personal account of o[ur] Most R[everend] F[ather], were sent in good time to pay the bill from the wood suppliers and to allow Father Young to pay the workers with the money he had gathered at Dublin. That is how the Congregation made its first beginnings in England. This point must not be overlooked so as to be recalled in future.

[p. 12] The time was drawing near for the Penzance mission to make a little more imposing appearance with the opening of the church which had been publicly announced for Easter. Even though Father Daly had done all in his power to have everything ready for the ceremony, the interior work was far from being advanced enough for that. Father Aubert, at that time, was free from his duties at the Youghal college and went to Penzance with a postulant. Father Young also made plans on his part to take part in the opening of the church. Since the interior work was not too far advanced, it took a great deal of effort and work to properly prepare the locale for the ceremony to take place. The flooring had not yet been done so they covered part of it with boards. The main east window and those in the front of the building were temporarily covered with large sheets of lumber. They placed drapes around the sanctuary and a rather nice altar in the middle on which to offer the holy sacrifice. The day after, Easter Sunday, Father Young celebrated an early first Mass and offered the customary prayers in the presence of a congregation made up of all non-Catholics. The solemn High Mass took place at eleven o'clock, the first one to be sung in three hundred years since Catholic worship had been abolished in the country. Father Young gave an excellent discourse on the mystery of the feast to which an audience of mostly Protestants listened very attentively. At Vespers in the evening there were even more people. Father Daly and Father Aubert both addressed the assembly. Everything took place in a most orderly and edifying manner. [p. 13] That is how we spent the feast of Easter, a memorable day in the establishment of Penzance. It was auspicious that the Solemnity of O[ur] D[ivine] S[aviour's] resurrection coincided with the reestablishment of the Catholic religion in this unfortunate country where [the faith], banished for [such] a long time, seemed to be [forever] extinguished. That is undoubtedly a sign of victory.

From that time on there were services held every Sunday in the church even though it was still unfinished. Every Saturday afternoon, they carefully cleaned it up, prepared it appropriately and set up a pro-



visional altar on which the sacred mysteries would be celebrated the following day. Every Monday, everything was removed so that the workers could continue their work all week long. However, even though there was little attraction from an incomplete church and religious services without music or other powerful accessories which add so much charm to Catholic ceremonies, instead of fewer, more and more Protestants kept coming to take part in the ceremonies. Every Sunday for Vespers there were several hundred and from time to time some new Catholic would come to augment the number of the faithful flock.

So, it was necessary to consider means to meet the church expenses which continually increased and to procure some revenue to maintain the small community. There were only two ways to do so: either by Father Young's begging or through the Propagation of the Faith. It was useless to expect some from the district itself which was already in rather embarrassing financial straits. On the part of Father Young there was little to hope in spite of all his energy and activity in attempting to gather funds. He was then at London working almost uselessly for this purpose. So, the only solution was to have recourse to the work of the Propagation of the Faith but before making any moves in this regard it was wise to gain ownership of the church. Father Young had formally agreed to cede [p. 14] us the property when we loaned the 300 Pounds sterling. All that had to be done was to write up the act of cession by a notary and have it signed by Father Young and two witnesses. That was done towards the end of the month, with an agreement made up by the office of Masters Borla and Miller at Penzance and all the formalities taken care of so that the property was transferred to the Congregation under Father Daly's name in a solid manner, beyond any contestation. When he came to London, Father Aubert concluded the [transaction] by Father Young's signature. He took care when he stopped at Bath to arrange everything with Doctor Baines whom he informed of the whole matter and who seemed completely satisfied and by whom he was perfectly well treated. He had obtained a letter of recommendation from this Prelate to be presented to the council of the Propagation of the Faith, destined to support the petition which he intended to send to the members of this work in favour of the Penzance mission. Our most R[everend] Father General had already written a letter to this effect to Mister Choiselat, the treasurer of this work at Paris. When Father Aubert went through this city during the month of June, he found everything favourably disposed. However, the Paris council did not want to deter-

mine anything without the agreement and cooperation of the one at Lyons to which it sent the letter of our most R[everend] Superior. Then they wrote a common letter to the most R[everend] Superi[or] requesting some [p. 15] particulars on the state of the Penzance mission, on the extent and direction envisioned by this mission, on the number of Catholics it included, the Protestant population in the neighbourhood, the hopes it harbours, the difficulties to be overcome and finally, the ordinary and extraordinary expenses. These details were requested to serve as a basis for the vote of the two councils determining the sum to allocate in favour of the mission at Cornwall. As a consequence, o[ur] most R[everend] Father General wrote a letter at the end of July to the two councils, a letter formulated by Father Aubert, which contained the particulars requested by the gentlemen of the society. Their definitive reply arrived at Marseilles only at the end of August. It contained the decision taken by the two councils in their August assembly. The letter could not have been more satisfying, both from its content and form. After having expressed the full interest they had taken in the Cornwall mission due to its importance and in view of o[ur] most R[everend] Father himself, they announced that the sum of 500 Pounds Sterling or 12,500 francs had been allocated for that year, regretting that the society's funds did not allow them to vote for a higher sum. O[ur] most R[ev-erend] Father Gen[eral], replying to this communication, expressed his gratitude to the council members and informed them that he was assigning Father Aubert, who was to pass through Paris, to arrange with Mister Choiselat, the society's treasurer, as to how to receive the said sum. Such was the result of this arrangement which was of extreme consequence for the Cornwall mission for without this allocation and the promise on the part of the council members to continue to support the Penzance mission, not only would the Congregation not have been able to accept it but the mission itself would probably have had to be abandoned due to the heavy debts weighing on the church and the expenses still to be incurred to make it serviceable and especially to have it completed<sup>42</sup> [ . . . ]

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<sup>42</sup> Bishop de Mazenod's and Father Aubert's letters to the Society of the Propagation of the Faith concerning Penzance are mostly published in *Oblate Writings* 5, pp. 159 and following.

## FATHER AUBERT'S CORRESPONDENCE (1843-1859)

### 1 - To the council members of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.<sup>1</sup>

*Financial request for the Penzance mission in the Duchy of Cornwall.*

Paris, June 17, 1843.

The abbé C[asimir] Aubert, missionary priest of the Congregation of Mary Immaculate, delegated by Bishop Baines,<sup>2</sup> Vicar Apostolic of the western district of England, to request help in favour of the Cornwall missions from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, is pleased to submit the following.

1 - The Duchy of Cornwall, situated at the extreme south-west of England, forms a territory by itself with very little communication with other counties and has a population made up of former Bretons that is completely distinct from that of England properly speaking. By its geographic position, its simple customs and the natural gaiety of its inhabitants, almost all farmers or miners, Cornwall is a region which presents a vast and fertile ground for Catholicism. But for that some missions must be established there and some priests maintained who can travel around the area, instruct [the people in the county], and dissipate the inveterate prejudices which have been instilled by their ministers for a long time.

2 - To arrive at such a desirable goal, some means are essential to meet the financial needs of these missions. The area itself has no resources, no rich Catholic family to help the missions to be set up. The

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<sup>1</sup> Orig.: Paris, Society of the Propagation of the Faith Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop P.A. Baines, O.S.B., Vicar Apostolic from 1823 to 1843.

only two missions of Falmouth and Lanherne, established a long time ago, are hardly able to support themselves. The Vicar Apostolic on his part is absolutely powerless to furnish any financial help to the new missions at Cornwall. If he is not assisted in this regard by the Propagation of the Faith, he will sadly have to leave Cornwall in its present abandoned state and see evaporate the good hope from the missions which he presently proposes to establish there now. An incontestable proof of the district's poverty and the Bishop's lack of resources is the fact that, in spite of good will, he has not been able to found even one mission in Cornwall in more than ten years while they have multiplied astonishingly in all the other counties.

3 - However, an Irish priest, inspired by holy zeal for the conversion of the people of Cornwall,<sup>3</sup> [has just] finished a rather beautiful church at Penzance, one of the main cities of the Duchy. The Vicar Apostolic of the district has entrusted this mission to the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. He plans to gather several of these priests there to preach the gospel to this long-abandoned area. This establishment gives great promise and may have great consequences. But, so as to cover the cost of the completion of the church and the upkeep of the missionaries, Bishop Baines turns to the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, completely confident in the generosity and enlightened zeal which distinguishes the gentlemen who form its council. Since the planned establishment, already begun, is to include three priests and a lay Brother,<sup>4</sup> the Vicar Apost[olic] requests the Council for an annual allocation for their lodging, food and upkeep. He also begs an extraordinary assistance for the current year to partly cover the debts of the uncompleted church. Included in these debts are the expenses which must absolutely be yet incurred, mounting to the sum of about a thousand pounds sterling or twenty-four thousand francs.

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<sup>3</sup> According to Larousse, it should say "Cornouaillais." This Irish priest was Father William Young.

<sup>4</sup> In June 1843, there was only Father Daly, who arrived in January, 1843 with a postulant, and the abbé Michael Power.

4 - Bishop Baines, even though he has also great needs in other areas of the district which<sup>5</sup> he is unable to meet, is not however requesting anything for them from the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, since he well knows that the purpose of this Society is not to support the missions in England properly speaking. But Cornwall is a region totally distinct from England, like Scotland and the principality of Wales, whose needs are as great as those of missions located at the ends of the earth. Consequently, a grant in its favour would be within the goals set by the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, and would respond to the desire of all the faithful in England and Catholic Europe who would gladly regard this as an act of noble charity in favour of such an interesting and up to now abandoned region.

In the name of and by delegation from Bishop Baines, Vicar Apostolic of the district of western England.

C[asim]ir Aubert, p[rie]st, O.M.I.

## 2 - To Bishop Eugene de Mazenod at Marseilles.<sup>6</sup>

*Success of the first parish mission preached by the Oblates in England.*

[Manchester, the end of 1849].

I certainly have something more to tell you about the mission that we recently gave at Manchester. I started to talk to you about it in the letter I wrote you the first week of this mission. I told you that it began under the most favourable auspices, that our services were followed zealously with extraordinary faithfulness and that our confessionals were already besieged with a multitude of people touched by God's grace. It was entirely different during the second week. There was such great eagerness to follow the services, especially in the evening that, an hour before they started, the church was already so packed with a crowd that we ourselves could scarcely get from our confessionals to the sacristy. I am not exaggerating when I state that this church,<sup>7</sup> which is hardly any

<sup>5</sup> Manuscript: the French has the feminine form.

<sup>6</sup> A copy in Bishop de Mazenod's letter to Father Baudrand, at Longueuil, January 11 and 25, 1850. Rome, Postulation Archives.

<sup>7</sup> The mission was preached in Saint Anne's Church, in the centre of the city. It began on October 6 and lasted three weeks and was given by Fathers Aubert, Cooke and Noble.

larger than Le Calvaire (including the galleries), held at least two thousand people. Without having seen it, it would be impossible to imagine how assiduously the holy word was received by that crowd starving for something religious, as well as how respectfully and piously they followed the ceremonies which, along with the preaching, form the main content of the mission. As for confessions, they were so numerous that we could not hear them all. We, the three missionaries, were especially busy listening to those poor people that we scarcely had the time to eat or take a few hours of rest which never happened until one or even two hours after midnight. When we saw that things were going like that, we clearly understood that it would be impossible to reserve everyone for the same day for absolution and general communion. So, starting in the middle of the second week, we absolved daily and gave communion to all those we found sufficiently well-disposed. In this way, we had completed between seven and eight hundred before the Sunday set for the closing, so that it was possible for us somewhat better to prepare the remaining eleven or twelve hundred people. What a beautiful day that Sunday was, just as beautiful as any similar day in the missions we give in France, with the same enthusiasm among the participants, the same splendor in the ceremonies, the same triumph for our holy religion. It is true that we did not have a planting of the cross, since England is not quite ready for that yet, but we left another souvenir of the mission which amounts to almost the same thing. We set up a *Way of the Cross* in this church. We also compensated for it in a ceremony not yet known on the European continent, that is, a solemn pledge in a Temperance Society. According to Father Cooke, a faithful disciple of Father Mathieu as you know, more than five hundred people enrolled under the banner of this association and took an oath before the altar to abstain from any intoxicating drink for the remainder of their lives. I must add that many needed this remedy: it is inconceivable how drunkenness reigns in such a general way among the working classes in the main English cities. What is even worse, it is almost as prominent among women as among men. If our Manchester mission had ended on the day we had assigned, great good would have already been done, but it would not have been complete since it was impossible for us to prepare in so short a time the many people who came for confession the second week as well as the good number who had not yet come forward. So, we decided to prolong the mission for a week. Since I had to leave for Maryvale for the major retreat, I left at Manchester Fathers Cooke and Noble who had just as much work during those eight days as before and

even more difficult work since they had to continue with what was left over from the first two weeks, with inveterate sinners and with the overloaded consciences of people who had not dared to come before. Their zeal was rewarded with most consoling results. That week was like a second mission where five or six hundred people, furthest removed from their religious duties, sincerely came back to God. That was the first attempt that our Congregation made in England in the ministry which is the principal aim of our institution. The Lord blessed this effort to prove to us that, here as elsewhere, he is calling our dear family to perform good works in his Church by means of retreats and missions and to do this good especially among the most abandoned souls, since it is to be noted that the parish that we evangelized in Manchester is made up of several thousand Irish people and several hundred other Catholics, all equally poor in temporal goods and very abandoned in spiritual matters. From now on, we can reply to the reproaches addressed to us from certain quarters ...

### 3 - [To Father Pascal Ricard, in Oregon].<sup>8</sup>

*What is Father Lempfrit doing in California? Letters for Brother Blanchet and Father Pandosy. Brothers Surel and Janin are not to become property owners.*

Marseilles, March 20, 1853.

Reverend and very dear Father Ricard,

Why is it that all of us here are so busy that even with the best of intentions in the world, every day it becomes more difficult to keep up with letter writing, not just for pure friendship or personal reasons, but for strict necessity in important business matters? I am quite aware that this reflection, true as it may be, is a rather weak consolation to those like yourself, stationed at a great distance from the centre of the family, who might need encouraging words from time to time to remind you that there are hearts who love you, even though far away. But at least you have some proof of what you already know, that if we have often observed too long a silence, it is not anyone's fault.

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<sup>8</sup> Orig.: Ottawa, Deschâtelets Archives, HPK 5322. R48Z 5.

After that little preamble which somewhat resembles a sincere confession of guilt, allow me to say, my dear man, that it seems to me that you, who ought to have more free time, could well give us some news of yourself a little more often and especially to give a more detailed account of your situation and plans, for example, how is it that it is six months since Father Lempfrit left Oregon to try something in California, and you have said nothing more about his venture? Is he dead or alive, what is he doing, in what part of that marvellous country is he now? It is one example out of many possible others that I could quote. But enough of all that. Let's talk about my principal concern in writing to you.

I am delegated to pass on to you the enclosed letter, which you will give unopened to Brother Blanchet. It is a reply from Reverend Father Vincens of which our Most Reverend Superior General is informed. I am likewise commissioned to give you an official response to the last letters of two lay Brothers, Surel and Janin. Our Most Reverend Superior General took the trouble to reply directly to a letter they had already written about the same matter. It seems they were not satisfied with it since they repeated their request, either to be authorized to take personal possession of some land that the government would give them or to be dispensed from their vows so as to leave. Our Most Reverend Father cannot allow them to become property owners in the manner they request, since it is contrary to the vow of poverty. Now, if they do not trust in the Congregation's justice and charity which certainly will take care of its members till death, whether they be Fathers or simple lay Brothers, and they want to be dispensed from their vows, they should think about it seriously a little more. If they persist in their plan you should let us know and the Bishop will consider what will be the best approach to take. Such is the reply that you are to transmit to them on behalf of our Most Reverend Father Superior General.

You will also find enclosed in this mailing a letter for Father Pandosy from his father. I don't know what he is communicating. Possibly he is complaining about his rather precarious position and is looking for a way to suggest that he come to his support. You will find out about it. Father Pandosy does badly when he always leaves his parents without news from him for a long time.

Farewell, my very dear Father. My affectionate greetings to all of ours in Oregon. Pray for me and rest assured I am totally yours in Christ and Mary Immaculate.

C. Aubert, O.M.I.



**4 - To Reverend Father Ricard, R[oman] Catholic Missionary, St. Joseph's Olympia, Lewis County, Oregon.<sup>9</sup>**

*News from the Congregation: second edition of the Rule and the Founder's Circular Letter on that occasion; Father Vincens named Provincial of France North; foundation in Orleans; departure of six missionaries; list of superiors; thirty novices, etc. At present, it is impossible to send English members to Oregon.*

Marseilles, June 24, 1853.

Reverend and very dear Father Ricard,

I am pleased that the few words I added to Our Most Reverend Father Superior General's letter made you happy. I can easily imagine it when I consider the distance which separates you from the rest of the Congregation and the isolation in which you and the few Fathers that make up your whole community find yourselves. I would like to have the time to write to you more often and at greater length so as to give you the legitimate satisfaction you expect. Today, to give a sign of good will, I am taking some time from my recreation to converse with you. First, your brother<sup>10</sup> came to Le Calvaire not long ago to ask about news from you. He seemed well and assured me that the rest of your relatives also are enjoying good health. As for news of the Congregation, there is nothing really extraordinary since the last time I wrote you. The new edition of our Rules is finally completed and has just been promulgated by Our Most Reverend Superior General. You will receive several copies on the first occasion which presents itself. By mail you will receive a copy of the Circular letter that our beloved Father published on that occasion and you will find the outline of our Congregation, divided into provinces and mission vicariates, as well as the names of the members who make up the administration of each province. After this organization, Father Vincens who had been named Provincial of France North had to take up his ordinary residence at Osier, the main centre of that Province. Now I find myself obliged to replace him as director of the house of Le Calvaire. So, I see new duties added to the

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<sup>9</sup> Orig.: Ottawa, Deschâtelets Archives, HPK 5322, R48Z 6.

<sup>10</sup> Father Pascal Ricard was from Allauch, near Marseilles.

already rather great load of the general correspondence of all the Provinces and Vicariates with the Congregation's centre. Since my last letter, we have concluded a new foundation to be completed in several weeks in the Orleans diocese. Six young missionaries have left, two for Ceylon, two for Canada and two for Natal in Africa. The two establishments of which I spoke to you are in the United States, one at Galveston and the other at Brownsville in the State of Texas which borders on Mexico. Our Fathers in these diverse far-off missions are doing a lot of good work, even though it is not without meeting more than one kind of obstacles. You very much want to have English-speaking men, which is first of all not an easy thing to obtain and besides, there is a great need in England so that it truly is hardly possible to remove them from there to send them elsewhere. Reverend Father Bellon is still on that famous island, as Visitor. He should come back at the end of summer. Father Magnan is still superior in Corsica. Father Martin at La Blachère, in the Viviers diocese, Father Viala is at Lumières, Father Dassy at Bordeaux, Father Honorat at Montreal, my brother at Bytown with Bishop Guigues, Bermond is at the Red River. You see how dispersed are all your former acquaintances.

Farewell, my very dear Father Ricard. Next time I hope to be a little more free to prolong our conversation. Today, you will allow me to end here, after begging a small share in your prayers.

All yours in Christ.

C. Aubert, O.M.I.

P.S. I forgot to tell you that Father Bernard is at Notre Dame de la Garde with a small community of our members. They are starting the building of a new chapel which will be very beautiful. The Oblates are continually doing very well at the Major Seminary. There are thirty novices; among them, six priests. Farewell again very dear Father Ricard. My regards to our Fathers who are habitually with you and please remember me also to those who are occupied in evangelizing the native people.

What has happened to Father Lempfrit? We are aware that he has gone to California, but for more than six months that he is there, what is he doing? where is he living? what hope does he give you? But all that supposes you are in touch with him.

**5 - [To Reverend Father Ricard, O.M.I.].<sup>11</sup>**

*Reply to letters of April and July. Disagreement of Father Ricard with Their Excellencies Magloire and Norbert Blanchet about the distribution of the grants from the Propagation of the Faith, but the Founder wishes the Oblates to stay in Oregon. Two conditions for continuing to work there. Code of conduct on material goods. We will send some men in a few months. Father d'Herbomez can assist Father Ricard and someday may be able to replace him.*

Marseilles, November 8, 1853.<sup>12</sup>

Reverend and very dear Father,

Today I am writing to you on behalf of our Most Reverend Superior General in reply to your various letters dated April and July. Our beloved Father would have had me write to you sooner but he was waiting for your own reply to his letter of May last. That explains why you have received nothing from him since that date.

I will now take up the principal questions contained in your last letter since it is useless to discuss the details contained in the ones of April. It is evident that all your discussions and differences with the Bishops of Oregon are to be resolved in the attitude you will adopt in regard to them, according to the decision that the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda gave on the use to be made of grants from the Propagation of the Faith.

I must first point out to you that, in expressing to you the desire of the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda that our Congregation agree to continue serving the missions of Oregon and in letting you know of the decision he consequently took, our Most Reverend Father Superior General did not intend to give to that desire all the importance that you attribute to it. The manner in which His Eminence Cardinal Fransoni expressed himself imposed no obligation on us to keep our missions in the area in which you are living. He left us full liberty to stay or to leave. In this way, in consenting to leave our Fathers there, our Most Reverend Superior General, in the name of the Congregation, made a decision

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<sup>11</sup> Orig.: Ottawa, Deschâtelets Archives, HPK 5322. R48Z 8.

<sup>12</sup> Below the date, Father Ricard wrote: "Received on February 25, 1854".

which both preserves the merit of a voluntary sacrifice and witnesses in a striking manner the absolute deference to a simple desire of the Holy See.

Now that the matter has been decided and a firm resolution taken that we shall not abandon that poor area even though our Congregation has met so little encouragement on the part of those on whom directly rest the care and responsibility of so many abandoned souls, it is wise, even necessary to clearly explain and firmly establish the basis on which your future rests to which both interested parties ought to agree. Here then is the thought of our beloved Father on this matter.

1° - In each diocese the Congregation must have a central house with property belonging exclusively and unconditionally to it. In the management of the temporal goods of this house, the Congregation must be entirely independent of the Bishop's control, whether it pertains to the source of revenues destined for its upkeep and development or to the use you make of it. As for external works of zeal and charity, you will be in the same conditions as the Fathers of the Congregation everywhere else and besides, the Rule is formal on this point. It makes us subject to the Ordinary's jurisdiction for everything which concerns the exercise of the holy ministry in regards to the people entrusted to pastoral care. It goes without saying that, for the interior government of the houses, the Bishop is not to get involved. He must leave it to the regular Superior according to what is expressly noted in our Constitutions approved by the Holy See. It also goes without saying that even for external ministry, the Bishop is not to treat directly with the men of the Congregation for major decisions such as establishing or abandoning a mission or moving a Father from one to another. He must deal beforehand with the regular Superior about the matter. 2° - The posts that the Congregation will occupy in Oregon, outside the main house we just spoke about, under whatever title they are established, missions or parishes, belong to the diocese and the Bishop exercises full control over them both for the exercise of ministry and administration of temporal goods. Property attached to these missions or parishes belongs to the diocese, the Congregation has only the usufruct and if it wishes to leave, whether by its own decision or as a consequence of a resolution taken by the diocesan authority, the Fathers are in this case on the same footing and in the same conditions as any ordinary parish priest in France or elsewhere where the incumbent is revocable at the Bishop's wishes and has no right to property whether to the immovable items of

the parish or the furnishings of the church and rectory for which there will always be kept an inventory as to what was there when he arrived and what was left at his departure. This does not hinder a priest from taking goods that belong to him, whether he brought furniture that belongs to him or he bought them with money other than from the parish administration, from savings, etc. He has an indisputable right to take them since they truly belong to him and never may any Bishop or Grand Vicar pose any contrary claim.

Dear Father Ricard, those are the two important points that must be set forth from now on as the starting point of your relations with the Oregon bishops. So, it doesn't seem that difficult since, according to the letters of the two prelates, Bishops Demers and Bishop Blanchet, the younger, and according to your own testimony, they have made overtures in that sense and the proposals that follow. Presumably, the views of the Archbishop of Oregon City are more or less the same.

Once these two points have been established, here is your line of conduct in temporal matters which have always been occasions of embarrassment for you and the cause of your disagreements with the bishops. The Congregation undertakes to request and obtain from the Councils of the Propagation of the Faith the necessary assistance for maintaining the Fathers it will send to Oregon at 100 pounds sterling per person, that is, twenty-five hundred francs each. You understand that it is not too much since it is recognized that it takes at least three thousand for other missionaries in that country. As long as the missions are in the imperfect and poor state in which they are, we will ask an added supplement for the travelling expenses of the Fathers in view of their trips and for buying various objects that they ordinarily receive. Evidently, the bishops can have nothing to complain about concerning this sort of assistance since it is entirely personal and not at all for the diocese. As to the cost of building chapels and rectories and for furnishing expenses and sacred vessels, there you will carefully leave these matters to their concern and pay not even a penny for them. This should settle matters, since the decision of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda relative to the use of funds from the Propagation of the Faith will be religiously observed, the rights which your bishops wish to preserve as to temporal goods of the missions will be recognized and, at the same time, the material interests of the Congregation safeguarded, at least in essential matters, that is, we will be in a similar state as Saint Paul when he told his disciple Timothy: "*habentes alimenta et quibus tegamur, his*

*contenti simus*" (1 Tim. 6,8). As to the main house, which is the mission centre in each diocese, since no one contests your ownership whether of the immovable or movable property which form the capital, it is especially there that your main concern will rest in temporal matters. Quite naturally, you will set aside the land that the government grants you as American citizens as well as all the revenue you attain, either through the produce from the land, from the colleges or schools that you may set up or finally, through the savings that each Father can set aside from the amount that is allotted for his personal expenses.

Such is what we have clearly settled and agreed upon among ourselves. It is in this sense that our Most Reverend Superior General will write to the Oregon Bishops who are awaiting a reply from him. Bishop Blanchet of Nesqually wants to know the conditions under which you will remain in his diocese. Bishop Demers is not so much concerned about the conditions but rather with the formation of one of our establishments in the territory under his jurisdiction. That brings me naturally to the question of increasing your personnel. Since we intend to continue and develop our missions in Oregon, clearly we must seriously consider placing you in conditions which will allow the achievement of such a goal and satisfy your justifiable request for some new men and your replacement as overall Director of this important work. While recognizing that your request is reasonable, we cannot leave you unaware of how difficult it is to meet it, even partially, and that it is impossible to grant all you ask for. You know the needs both of our houses in Europe and of those in our establishments in countries overseas. Everyone is crying out for more personnel and supporting their request with good reasons. In such a state of affairs, how would it be possible to send four or five members to one place? It just could not be done. All that we can do for you is to prepare two or three men from here for next Spring, with whom you can accept the invitation of Bishop Demers to give two or three Priests for his missions. Do not count on someone of English origin since we don't have such even for the missions in England where they are more necessary than in Oregon or similar places where it is possible to succeed without having the accent of those who live near the Thames but where it suffices to know English as well as the French-Canadians or the Frenchmen who take the trouble to learn it and do well in the United States and elsewhere, as we know. As for your replacement, it is likewise useless to expect one from France or Canada. Our Most Reverend Superior General thinks that you can settle this part

of your difficulties with the resources you have at hand. Father d'Herbomez was sent mainly with the intention that he could assist you when you would need that kind of assistance in conducting your affairs. He is generally considered a man of common sense, talent, solid virtues and dedication to meet every test. Now he is no longer young and has the experience of your missions. Would he require more to make him apt, if not to replace you completely, at least to be chosen and prepared to become your second or associate for the time being, until a little later on when he can definitely replace you and we can grant you the rest you really need and have merited in every way. That is all I have to tell you this time on behalf of our Most Reverend Superior General. I don't think I have omitted anything essential. I conclude, very dear Father Ricard, in recommending myself to your prayers and assuring you of the sincere attention with which I am your devoted brother in Jesus and Mary.

C. Aubert, O.M.I.

**6 - [To Father Semeria at Jaffna].<sup>13</sup>**

*Regret at not having written very often due to lack of time.*

Marseilles, January 26, 1854.

Very dear Father Semeria, since you will have recognized the handwriting in the above letter, you would have a right to complain about me if I did not profit by the small space left over to address a few lines to you, if only to directly recommend myself to your good memory. I can scarcely tell you any more this time, but you will be kind enough to excuse me. I count beforehand on your favorable disposition in my regard which I have never had the intention of abusing but which I have possibly used a little too much. What can one do, since my duties are such that I seldom do what I want and my bonds of friendship suffer accordingly. Let's hope that some day I will be able to make up for this forced privation and converse with my friends a little more freely. Farewell, very dear Father, a thousand good wishes on my behalf to all our Fathers with you. Pray for me and trust that I am all yours forever in Christ and M[ary] Im[maculate].

C. Aubert, O.M.I.

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<sup>13</sup> Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, L.M. Séméria file. Father Aubert copied a letter from Cardinal Franson to Bishop de Mazenod of January 10, and added these few lines.

**7 - Reverend Father Ricard, St. Joseph's House, Olympia, Washington Territory, North America. Via Liverpool and New York.<sup>14</sup>**

*News: Bishop de Mazenod's good health; about thirty novices and as many scholastics; foundation of Notre Dame de Cléry in the diocese of Orleans.*

*The Founder wrote to Bishop Magloire Blanchet. Ex-Oblate Father Lempfrit has joined the Chartreuse. Death of Father Ciamin in Ceylon.*

Marseilles, March 7, 1854.

Very dear Fa[ther] Ricard,

You have already seen by the change of handwriting at the last line of the other page that our Most Reverend Superior General was interrupted as he was writing you this letter. He would have liked to continue it himself and send it to you full of kind words of which he alone has the secret and which do so much good for his sons, but that is impossible at the moment. So I will continue myself, giving you some news which undoubtedly will please you. Thanks be to God, everyone is healthy among us, both in Europe and overseas, beginning with o[ur] beloved Father who still enjoys excellent health and especially complete mental vigour. The Congregation continues to fulfill its ministry with abundant blessings, whether in ordinary missions or in those among heretics and infidels. Our novitiate at Osier has about thirty good novices who are doing fine. There are about as many Oblates at the Major Seminary in Marseilles who also give great satisfaction. The new foundation at Orléans has just taken place. It is again a renowned Marian shrine (Notre Dame de Cléry) which has been entrusted to us in that area. I must also notify you that in agreement with what I wrote in one of my last letters, o[ur] Most Reverend Superior General has written to Bishop Blanchet of Nesqually in the same sense as to you on the question of your relations with the Bishops regarding the material property of your missions. The unfortunate Lempfrit has returned to France. He had the audacity to present himself again, but after a very severe letter he drew on himself then, he ended up by choosing to go to the

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<sup>14</sup> Orig.: Ottawa, Deschâtelets Archives. The first part of the letter was written by Bishop de Mazenod, cf. *Oblate Writings* 1, vol. 2, pp. 69-70.



Chartreuse. May God keep him there till death! I don't think I have written to you since the death of Reverend Father Ciamin, one of the missionaries in Ceylon, who died at Jaffna last November. It was the death of a saint. Please offer the Masses prescribed for him and the suffrages determined by the new edition of Our Rules and Constitutions, that is, you must say a Mass for him and the Brothers will offer a Communion. Farewell, dear Father Ricard, you will probably receive a letter in the same mail from the excellent Father Accolti [S.J.]. Farewell again, pray for me as I am all yours.

C. Aubert, O.M.I.

### 8 - [To Father Ricard in Oregon].<sup>15</sup>

*From now on, precise relations between Bishops and Oblates. Two Fathers and a Brother will leave for Oregon so there will be two missionaries in each mission. At the present, we are neither going to California nor Vancouver. Grant from the Propagation of the Faith. Letter of Bishop Magloire Blanchet of Nesqually.*

L.J.C. and M.I.

Marseilles, July 16, 1854.<sup>16</sup>

Reverend and very dear Father Ricard,

I am replying to your letter of last March 3rd which only arrived here about the middle of last month. How come the letters from Europe to Oregon now take so long on route? I see that our letter of November 1853 only got to you in February. That means it took three months for the crossing whereas before it seemed that it took scarcely more than two months.

I go on to various points of my reply.

1. Our Most Reverend Superior General has gladly perceived that the bases on which he wishes your relations with Oregon to be established find perfect agreement on your part and conform to your desires. There is every reason to hope that, once they are openly adopted, the respective positions of the Bishops and Oblates will be clearly outlined

<sup>15</sup> Orig.: Ottawa, Deschâtelets Archives, HPK 5322. R48Z 10.

<sup>16</sup> After the date, Father Ricard wrote: Received on September 15, 1854.

and their mutual rights safeguarded. So, you will from now on operate on these bases, unless the Oregon Bishops do not want to comply with them, in which case, there would be nothing else for us to do except to say farewell. As yet they have not replied to the letter of our Most Reverend Father who proposed to them the arrangements in question. They should have already let you know what impression it made on them.

2. I don't want to leave you with an illusion about the number of men who will be sent to you. It seems to me that I told you rather clearly in my letter of November 8th that all we could do for you was to give you two or three. And that is what will take place, two young Fathers, charming men, and an English lay Brother,<sup>17</sup> have been waiting for two months for Father Accolti who still can't leave Rome where he has been for more than three months dealing with business concerning his missions. I don't know when they will leave since this Father, who was supposed to have passed these days by Marseilles, still hasn't given any sign of life. As soon as he shows up again, we will send them on their way with him. They will travel together to New York where Father Accolti will entrust them to the new Superior of Missions for the Jesuits in California and Oregon to continue their trip to you. Father Accolti is changing Provinces and will stay in the United States. With the help that our Most Reverend Superior General has given you, you will be able to give a companion to Father Chirouse and a replacement to Father Pandosy for Father d'Herbomez whom you will call to yourself as your substitute or Pro-Vicar. Thus you will be able to do away with the grave inconvenience of leaving alone any of our missionaries to native people. As for the central house of Saint Joseph's at Olympia, it will be strengthened by the addition of Father d'Herbomez and a lay Brother capable of teaching school to the children belonging to that mission. You understand by this that there will still be no way of doing anything for Bishop Demers. That is undoubtedly unfortunate but we have not promised him anything. All that can be invoked in his favor are a few

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<sup>17</sup> Fathers Paul Durieu and P.L. Richard. As in the Founder's letters, there is no name for the Brother. In 1854, Brothers Surel, Janin, Blanchet and Verney were already in Oregon. In a letter to Bishop de Mazenod of November 10, 1854, Father Durieu mentioned Brother Leo. This first name appears in several letters from the Oregon missionaries to the end of the century, always without a surname. No Brother Leo made vows in the Congregation during the Founder's lifetime. This Leo was probably a lay person.

rays of hope which he would be wrong to see as a commitment on the part of our Congregation. The fact is that the Oregon missions are something sad and less than encouraging, certainly that is what you yourself said in your last letter especially when you described the kind of life that our Fathers lead among native people, the spiritual dangers to which they are exposed and the little regularity and piety they are able to observe. All that is not very encouraging. So, first of all, our approach must be to strengthen the posts we now occupy and later we will see how things turn out.

3. When Father Accolti stopped here, our Most Reverend Superior General, in agreement with the information that this Father gave us about California, had pretty well resolved to set up a house there. It was in this vein that he spoke to you in his last letter of March which you must have received by now. Since Father Accolti, in whom you have a friend who would have lent you a strong hand for this establishment, is not to return to California, and besides, since the Archbishop of San Francisco doesn't seem to be too interested in us, it would probably be better to limit ourselves this time, using the men sent you to respond to the most urgent needs, especially strengthening the Oregon missions and waiting another year before attempting anything in California, for we will sooner or later have to consider going there. That will be a way to unite Oregon with our other American missions, especially those in Texas and Mexico where our Fathers at Brownsville are going to make a foundation.

4. Now I will go on to the questions of temporal goods and finances. We have agreed to request the Propagation of the Faith for a sum of 100 pounds sterling for each missionary, as well as some help for the central house, some traveling money and the purchase of some articles to be distributed as gifts in our missions among the native peoples. You will be eight missionaries which amounts to 800 pounds sterling already. But since, up to now, we have scarcely asked for fifteen hundred francs per person, in our annual report to the Councils of the Society we have received only 600 pounds sterling for this year - 5,000 francs. We have also asked for 4000 francs for traveling expenses for two new Fathers and a lay Brother, as well as 4000 francs, 1000 of which is for the expenses for the chapel at Saint Joseph and the other three thousand for the trips of the Fathers among their native people and the gifts they must offer them. We are asking 23,000 francs in total for Oregon. We will be pleased if the Councils of the Society grant 20,000

from which we must subtract 1,000 for your share of contribution to the general funds according to the circular letter of our beloved Father of August 2, last year.

Besides, we will let you know exactly the precise amount of your grant after they have officially communicated it to us from Lyons. Meanwhile, you can rest assured and trust that as you increase in numbers, they will grant you more abundant support. I think that, beginning next year, instead of receiving 10,000, you can count on 15,000 francs for your ordinary grant. Consequently, we will write to London to have this sum accredited to you with the Hudson's Bay Company so that they can inform their agents in Oregon. It seems that with this amount and what your properties should gain for you there, you should not only be able to cover the cost of your food and lodging but to spare something to balance and establish yourselves on solid and respectable ground at Olympia, your central point. As regards property, you have never explained the reason you have given to the diocese half of the land that the government granted you as American citizens. Neither have you told us to whom has been conceded by our Fathers the legal rights they had also acquired by this same title, in what place they have chosen their property, and what means you have taken to assure it all to the Congregation in case of the disappearance of the concessionaries due to death or another cause. Your great preoccupations with the disagreements you had with the Oregon Bishops explain this omission on your part, but since you are now at rest in this regard, you will no longer have reason to set such questions aside, as well as so many others which are intimately connected with the Congregation's interests in the establishments entrusted to you. In the future then, try to keep our Most Reverend Superior General up to date on everything by regular correspondence which includes all major business items and even those of lesser importance which should be mentioned, persons and things. I will not give you any news now since I am sending you a printed item which you will receive in the next mail that includes all you could desire in this area.

Farewell, very dear Father Ricard. Give my regards to all our Fathers and Brothers in Oregon.

All yours in Christ.

C. Aubert P[rie]st, O.M.I.

July 17. I was going to seal my letter and mail it today, the last chance to be on time for mail to America when your long letter from the end of April just arrived as well as one of the same date to our Most Reverend Father Superior General from the Bishop of Nesqually. Their content obliges me to add something to what I have written above.

According to your letter, we must conclude that the Bishops of Oregon do not accept what was set down last November by our Most Reverend Superior General concerning your relations with the Bishops, while Bishop Blanchet says in his letter that the Bishop of Marseilles has, by his proposal, put an end to your differences and clarified matters, I think that is equivalent to accepting the basis on which Our Superior wishes things to be carried out from now on. It is evident from the somewhat embarrassing tone of his letter that the Bishop of Nesqually didn't agree voluntarily but only by force since he realizes that such must be the case if he wishes to assure the services of our Congregation in his diocese. So, I will very soon send you a copy of his last letter as well as a rather detailed reply to your own which we have just received.

For today, I limit myself to acknowledging that we have received it. It goes without saying that our Most Reverend Superior General will also reply to Bishop Blanchet. In the meantime, try to keep on good terms with him. Don't write him too often and in such case measure your words and expressions well so that he will have nothing to complain about for any reason whatever.

It seems that the Prelate is a little prejudiced against you. As to applying the guidelines proposed by our Superior and which are supposed to be adopted by both parties, they are more for the future than the past. The establishment of Olympia is our concern, so everything else will easily be worked out.

P.S. From now on you will receive the *Gazette du Midi*, the Sunday edition which gives a summary of the whole week with most interesting news not only from France but from all Europe.

The Bishop has not replied to your question relative to the faculty of saying Mass in an apartment within the community when you can't say it in chapel. No doubt you have this faculty in Oregon as elsewhere since it is common law for religious. Farewell.

**9 - Reverend Father Ricard, O.M.I., St. Joseph's Olympia, Washington Territory, Oregon. Via Liverpool New York.<sup>18</sup>**

*Recall the contents of the preceding letter. Fathers Durieu and Richard and Brother Leo have left England. In the future, there must be two religious in each mission. We cannot send anyone to Bishop Demers at this time. Steps to take to obtain subsidies from the Propagation of the Faith through the Hudson's Bay Company. The new missionaries are bringing copies of the new edition of the Rules and breviaries with the new Oblate proper.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Marseilles, September 5, 1854.

Reverend and very dear Father,

In my last letter of July 18<sup>19</sup> last, I replied to your letters of the preceding March 3 and April 30. I told you that with the latter, there also arrived one from Bishop Blanchet of which I was going to send you a copy. But in truth, that letter was so insignificant that, after reflecting on it a bit, I considered it useless to waste the time in transcribing it for you. Suffice it to say that it included some complaints on the personal relationship between your Reverence and the Oregon Bishops, and some observations on what the Prelate considered to be opportune for the missions of that area. Besides that, as I told you already in my last letter, the Bishop of Nesqually formally declared that he accepted the bases on which will rest your relations with the Bishops of that Province from now on, concerning material goods, an essential point, all that you had asked for.

I also told you in my last letter that we are going to send you two Fathers and a Lay Brother, that Reverend Father Accolti, who is not going to return to Oregon, would accompany them as far as New York from where they will travel by way of Mexico and California to their final destination. Today, I can inform you that finally these Fathers have left from Le Havre last Tuesday and should have embarked at Liverpool on Saturday, the 2nd of this month on their way to New York where they will arrive about the fifteenth. From there, it will take them at least a

<sup>18</sup> Orig.: Ottawa, Deschâtelets Archives, HPK 5322. R48Z 11.

<sup>19</sup> It should be July 16.

month or two to get to you. However, I think that, since they will not be stopping very much on the way and that they left eight days ahead of my letter, they will arrive there almost as soon as it does. There is no need for me to repeat here what I have already told you about these men. The two young Fathers have an excellent attitude and they are able to give you service in whatever missions to which you send them. I repeat to you that the intention of Our Most Reverend Father Superior General is that you take Reverend Father d'Herbomez with you to Olympia as your companion and Pro-Vicar. You will arrange the rest so that Fathers Chirouse and Pandosy have a companion and that from now on our Fathers will never be left alone in a mission. It is better to undertake less work and do it in conditions more in line with what our Rule prescribes for the spiritual good of our members. That is an important point which we must constantly keep in mind, on which I believe, my dear Father, your men in Oregon will have to undergo some small changes. It's up to you to see to the most prompt and efficacious way of doing so. True, in the past, you found yourselves in less favorable conditions and exceptional circumstances, but from now on, these obstacles will no longer exist. On the one hand, you will be more numerous and sufficiently reinforced in the field you have to cultivate, and on the other hand, you will no longer be exposed to those former disagreeable discussions with the Bishops. Concerning Bishop Demers, I remind you that if he hasn't received a letter from Our Most Reverend Father Superior General, we are not to be blamed. Besides, you can certainly tell him *viva voce* the reply of our beloved Father or write it to him if you do not have a chance to speak with him, to let him know that it is impossible for our Congregation to give him any missionaries. He still has the possibility of seeking manpower elsewhere.

Concerning the ten thousand francs that you were authorized to withdraw from Reverend Father Tempier, it is true that you did mention it in your last letter. But, how is it that you did not follow the usual procedure which is to give notice of fifty to sixty days for the payment of these bills which come from such a distance so that we will have the time to put everything in order? This time you gave only ten days as if you were writing from Lumières or Osier. Kindly do not do this in future, but use the procedure we had in place before. I told you in my last letter that our request to the Propagation of the Faith would be greater beginning this year since you will have more members and consequently more needs. However, before signing any cheques, wait until

you have received official communication as to the sum with which you will be credited at the honourable Hudson's Bay Company at London, a communication that will hardly reach you before next spring. Since we are speaking of temporal matters, I am grateful for your trust in choosing me to be your heir; but you haven't considered that I also am getting old and the years are beginning to show on my bald head. Neither did you consider this when you complained about the brevity of my letters. I think they don't generally offend in this regard since I usually take the largest sheet when I write to you. If I don't always do it, you must excuse me since you are not the only one to whom I am obliged to write. With the expansion of our Congregation, every week I have to write a long letter to one of the superiors of our foreign missions, besides keeping up rather regular correspondence with the members and the superiors of our first French Province which includes nine houses. And, I say again, I am beginning to feel the weight of my years, even though, thanks be to God, I continue to enjoy good health. Today I will not give you any news. Our young apostles will bring you several printed copies of a newsletter on our dear Congregation in which you will find some very interesting details.

Those Fathers will also bring you some copies of the new edition of our Rules as well as some breviaries with the brief proper of Oblate feasts and various printed brochures concerning the Congregation.

Farewell, very dear Father Ricard. Give my greetings to all our Fathers and Brothers in Oregon. Please accept my very affectionate brotherly greetings, in Christ and Mary Immaculate.

C. Aubert, p[rie]st, O.M.I.

N.B. Our Most Reverend Superior General had the intention to write to Bishop Blanchet by today's mail, but I doubt whether he will have the time. In any case, you can count on it that he will do so in next week's mail, reinforcing the arrangements we agreed on.

**10 - Reverend Father Fabre, O.M.I., superior of the Major Seminary, Marseilles.<sup>20</sup>**

*Gratitude for sending a letter from Bishop de Mazenod. Reply to several requests from Father Fabre concerning the necrology, Oblates in England, etc.*

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<sup>20</sup> Orig.: AGR, Casimir Aubert file.



Notre Dame de Montolivet,<sup>21</sup> December 4, 1854.

Reverend Father,

I am grateful for your kind consideration in sending me the letter from O[ur] Most R[eve]rend Superior General. I was greatly interested in reading the details it contained and appreciate well that you afforded me that pleasure.<sup>22</sup>

I will respond briefly to your letter since an encounter, even with a brother who speaks of good and useful things, should be short during a retreat.

I didn't find in your letter the necrology you were talking about, so can say nothing about it. The name of the lay Brother who died in Canada this year was Langlois. For other information, look in the notebook that contains names and baptismal names, etc. of all the members of the Congregation in chronological order. You will find it on the desk of O[ur] beloved Father which was carried into his room on the ground floor which used to be his bedroom, opposite his cabinet.

I think I will have to write to Reverend Father Richard towards the end of the week, after the arrival of Brother Mourier whom we await for Friday's feast. That will give enough time to receive his reply to your question whether they received in England the Ordo for 1855.

I will seriously consider your wish that I try to obtain mass stipends for you for our Fathers in England. But the sources I have applied to, such as Viviers, Lyons, etc., who are now supplying the general fund do not allow me to promise you very much, especially since I would rather keep for our Montolivet house part of the mass stipends that generous people may place at my disposal.

Please remember me before the holy altar, I beg you, Reverend Father, to always consider me as your very humble and devoted brother in Christ and Mary Immaculate.

C. Aubert, p[ri]es]t, O.M.I.

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<sup>21</sup> Besides being Secretary General and Midi Provincial, Father Aubert was just named professor at the scholasticate of Montolivet, which opened for the 1854-1855 academic year.

<sup>22</sup> Bishop de Mazenod was at Rome where he had gone with Bishop Jeancard for the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. The letter is of November 28, see *Oblate Writings* 11, pp. 251-252.

**11 - [To Father Joseph Fabre, Superior of the Major Seminary in Marseilles].<sup>23</sup>**

*Sends to the seminary Father Joseph Andrieux to teach Holy Scripture while continuing to preach missions.*

Marseilles, February 12, 1855.

Reverend Father,

I am sending to you Reverend Father Andrieux who has been assigned to your house community as professor of Holy Scripture to the students. You are aware that, as Director and Professor at the Major Seminary, that Father will not be entirely removed from functions in s[acred] ministry, namely preaching. I will discuss with you how to reconcile the duties of his position in the seminary with the exercise of his missionary vocation.

Please accept, Reverend Father, the assurance of my esteem and sincere affection.

Your devoted brother in Christ and M[ari]a Im[maculata].

C. Aubert, p[rie]st, Prov[incial], O.M.I.

**12 - [To Reverend Father Santoni, Provincial at Montreal].<sup>24</sup>**

*Decision of the General Council concerning the parish entrusted to the Oblates at Bytown. Do not abandon the college at Buffalo. A novice's profession. Father Aubert's illness. The Province of Canada is not exempt from contributing to the general treasury.*

Marseilles, May 21, 1855.

Reverend Father,

The time has finally arrived to officially inform you of the decision taken by o[ur] M[ost] R[everend] Superior General in Council relative to our establishing an independent house at Bytown for the Congregation. Since I was commissioned to communicate this to you

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<sup>23</sup> Orig.: AGR, Casimir Aubert file.

<sup>24</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of letters 1855-1863, pp. 15-16.

but was hindered from doing so by an illness I underwent last March, you will not be too surprised at the delay that a solution to this situation suffered. Moreover, as on the first news I sent you about the choice the Council was prepared to settle on, you replied with a more solemn affirmation of the inconveniences which would result from its adoption, o[ur] Most Rev[eren]d Superior General wished to bring up this important question by once again submitting it to the deliberation of his assistants. So, after considering anew all the relative information in this affair and after a rather long discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of each of the three proposals put forward on the topic of the establishment in question, here is the conclusion that we unanimously agreed upon: 1° - the project of entrusting the Oblates with the spiritual care of Catholics in the upper city and building a church for them in that area cannot be accepted due to the inconveniences recognized in this plan, whether by the Oblates of Canada or Bishop Guigues himself and especially that of thus obliging them to exercise their ministry exclusively in a language foreign to most of them, when there are French-speaking people in the city who could consequently more naturally be confided to them. 2° - The plan to build a church for the Oblates on Dalhousie Street or thereabouts which would be used exclusively for serving the French Canadians of Bytown is also not admissible especially for two major inconveniences. The first is of a material nature, the too-close proximity of the cathedral and the new church, while there are other areas of the lower city where the Catholic population is situated too far away and thus deprived of the help it needs. The other inconvenience, of a higher order, consists in that the French Canadian population, forming exclusively the congregation served by the Oblate Father, would be kept away from the cathedral which is justifiably considered as the common church of all Catholics and the Bishop who is the prime shepherd of all the faithful, instead of calling them nearer to himself to hear his word, to be united more closely with his prayer and receive the sacraments from his hands, would in some way drive them away from himself. 3° - So, there remains a third plan, that of placing the Oblates of Mary at Bytown in the part of the lower city which is east of Cumberland Street to the Rideau River. It seemed to better counterbalance in the mind of the Council of o[ur] Most R[everen]d Superior General, the advantages and disadvantages and to sufficiently reconcile the views of Bishop Guigues with those of the Oblate Fathers; thus it was accepted, but with the following modifications: 1° The French-Canadian population ought to make up the large majority of the con-

gregation served by the Oblates in their church and thus the Fathers would be dispensed from offering service in both languages; the Irish people from their area could, however, go there for Mass and confessions. 2° On the other hand, the French Canadians would in no way be excluded from the cathedral and ought to have the same right in this regard as the Irish relative to the Oblate Fathers' Church. 3° It goes without saying that the Bishop of Bytown would be faithful to what he promised in the case this plan be adopted, that for a certain number of years, the boundary of the Oblate church would extend to Dalhousie Street and that Bishop Guigues would effectively help them to meet the expenses of their establishment and especially of the construction of the church; and moreover that he would make no plans to open any public chapel, even a college or seminary chapel, in that section of the city in the area accorded to the Oblates.

There you have, Reverend Father, the summary of the deliberations of the Council on the important matter that you and Bishop Guigues had submitted to o[ur] M[ost] R[everen]d Superior General. You now have a positive decision and know precisely what you must abide by. You will act in accordance with it. There still remains to examine what manner must be undertaken to carry out the resolution of which I have given you official communication today and after that how you will establish your relations with the Bishop of Bytown when our Fathers stationed with him will have to enter into their new position.

I am now going on to another question. In your last letter you asked me for a reply to the proposition you submitted to o[ur] Most R[everen]d Superior General relative to Buffalo. The Council which deliberated about it several times does not think we should abandon the college to limit [ourselves] to the Major Seminary. It hopes that this establishment, after undergoing the usual difficulties of such a venture in its first years, will finally prosper and give an opportunity to accomplish some real good in that country. So, you must try to set your sails to continue for some time rather than take refuge in the plan you propose, unless it becomes evident that there is no other way to get out of that embarrassing situation.

The profession that you had the novice make after his trial period, which ended at the beginning of last April, is certainly valid and canonical since you fulfilled the conditions set down in this regard by our Rules and Constitutions. Besides, the approval of our most R[evern]d

Superior General and his council was not lacking to that act, since the novice had been passed for Oblation in a council meeting of March. If the news did not get to you, it's because some letters do not always arrive at their destination. That is an inconvenience that happens to us in France, even more so in our relations with foreign countries. It seems that Canada is not exempt. Proof lies also in your letters which sometimes go astray, for example, the one you mention to me which contained a long account of the year's events. Since you kept a copy, please send me one, but on thin paper, since the kind you ordinarily use weighs too much and greatly increases the postage.

With that I am finished with the official part of my letter. I am glad that I still have some space left over to chat a moment with you. I must first sincerely thank you for the part that you played in the illness<sup>25</sup> which nearly carried me off from this world last March and the interest you took in my recovery. Please express my gratitude also to all our Fathers at Montreal for their sympathy on that occasion. Now, I am perfectly healthy and, with some precautions for the future, there is reason to believe that I will not cause any more such alarms. Finally, I must make a small remark to you, inspired solely by the desire to do some good and the mutual trust that exists between us. Thus, it seems to me that you are somewhat loose in your interpretation of your Province's obligations to the general account of the Congregation. You must clearly understand, dear Father, that what has been set down in this regard for obedience should be as faithfully carried out as every other prescription. I want to especially mention the contribution of one third of the Masses imposed by our Most R[everen]d Superior General's circular letter. Since it was decided that no house and, even less, no Province be exempt, there remains nothing else except to carry it out without too much ill-will, since it is basically a proof of interest in and a mark of affection for our common mother. Thus, I learned with sadness that you still haven't sent in your contribution to the General Treasurer for 1854. I beg you to hasten to write him to let him know that you have arranged matters and that he can count on you for the sum your Province owes him.

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<sup>25</sup> Father Aubert was "suddenly struck down by a brain paralysis which robbed him of every physical and moral capacity," cf. the Founder's letter to Father Conrad of March 19, 1855, in *Oblate Writings* 11, p. 259.

There you have a very full letter. I think I have told you the main things. I close, asking you to extend my best wishes to all our members with you. Remember me at Mass and always consider me, Reverend and very dear Father, as your most devoted brother in Christ.

C. Aubert

**13 - [To Father Julien Baudre, at Galveston, Texas].<sup>26</sup>**

*Need for money and professors at the Galveston college. It is easier to find money than to find English-speaking professors. Father Verdet has completed his holidays and will leave for Brownsville in a month.*

Marseilles, June 2, 1855.

Reverend and very dear Father,

It seems that it is already a longer than usual time since I have either directly sent you news or written to you about our activities. I presumed that Father Verdet who had scarcely anything else to do in France would more easily than I find free time he could use to keep you up to date on whatever would interest you. However, I don't want to put off any longer writing to you so as not to expose myself to losing the good habit of corresponding with you. Reverend Father Verdet repeated to us verbally what you had said by letter, that is, the indispensable need you have for *assistance* in men and money. Even though it is not easy, considering the state in which the Congregation finds itself, to satisfy demands of this nature which come from every part of the globe where it has establishments, it can, however, come to your help on both accounts. Already, it has set at your disposition fifteen thousand francs which is your share of the allocation from the Propagation of the Faith for the year 1854. There were five thousand francs left over from last year for which our Fathers at Galveston were accredited at New Orleans. If they haven't as yet withdrawn this sum, they shouldn't wait any longer to ask for it. So you see that as for the financial question of your establishment, you are not forgotten. But, if to what I have just written, I add that the Congregation, in its requests made this year to the Council of the aforesaid Society, about twenty thousand francs are meant for you, it is most likely that this sum or something approaching it will be granted to you. So it is evident that your house at Galveston will not be in a condition to inspire any fear as to material interests,

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<sup>26</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of letters 1855-1863, pp. 19-20.

since once you have received the various sums I have just mentioned, you will be able to pay off almost entirely the debt which remains on your college for construction costs. As for current expenses for food, lodging, upkeep, and others, it is not too much to raise your ordinary income from the tuition from boarding students and reimbursement from day scholars so as to elevate it a little above the sum of total expenses. As for help with manpower, we are not as well supplied, since money can, with some effort, be found, but vocations cannot be obtained by willpower, and unfortunately they are not sprouting among us in numbers proportionate to our ever-wider needs. We understand well the real inconvenience you are obliged to undergo in having recourse to helpers taken from outside the Congregation, but also how you cannot pass beyond this kind of support from the very beginning of your establishment. You will have to resign yourself to what is done in other places in houses like your own not only in the United States but in areas where church or religious communities are older and have made more progress. Besides, it would be entirely impossible for us to supply sufficient personnel for all the classes you must give. What is most urgent for you and within the realm of possibility for us is to send you one English Oblate or, if he is not so by origin, one that knows English well. It is not certain yet if this man will be a priest. If we can take one for you among those who are already elevated to the priesthood, we will prefer to do so, otherwise you will receive him as he is as long as he fulfills the purpose in question in knowing and speaking English. Our Most Reverend Superior General thinks that he will not have to leave before next September or the end of August, fearing that he will arrive in your territory at a time when it is still hot and he doesn't want him to be exposed to experiencing too great a change in climate. As for Reverend Father Verdet, on the contrary, it seems apparent that he will not put off his return to America. The good effects he had hoped for his health by breathing native air have not been very noticeable. So, he will rest for a few more weeks and then leave for the United States at the end of this month or the beginning of next July. That is all the news I have for you this time. Besides being very busy with business matters, I see that I have run out of space. There remains only for me to tell you that we are all well, especially our Most Reverend Superior General who continues to enjoy excellent health. Please give my affectionate greetings to all our Fathers in Galveston and consider me, dear Father Baudre, always yours, etc.

C. Aubert

**14 - [To Father François Bermond at Saint Boniface].**<sup>27</sup>*Sending letters and departure of two Fathers for the Red River.*

Marseilles, June 2, 1855.

Reverend Father,

I am writing to you to ask you to be good enough to send on to their respective destinations the two short letters here included that I was mandated to write. I thought that you were better positioned than any other of our Fathers at Saint Boniface to carry out this task since your friendship with these two young missionaries to whom they are addressed will prompt you to give them special attention. Now I will go on to a more important matter. You recommended that in future we notify you of any new departures for the Red River and let you know the probable dates of their trip over the prairie between Saint Paul, Minnesota and Saint Boniface, so that you can take the necessary measures to protect them on that part of the voyage where they may be exposed to meet hostile Indians. So, I am informing you that O[ur] M[ost] R[everend] Sup[er]ior Gen[er]al has decided, at repeated requests from Bishop Taché, to send him two new laborers,<sup>28</sup> who will first be directed to Saint Boniface, where you will keep them until Bishop Taché informs you about them and lets you know what is to be their final destination. These two men will scarcely be able to leave France until the end of the month, consequently will arrive at Montreal during the last two weeks in July. Our Fathers in Canada will send them on to Bishop Crétin<sup>29</sup> where they will probably be until the middle of August. We have every confidence that this Bishop will give them all the help he can to assure the success of their trip over the area they still have to cover. From the information that I have just detailed for you, you will be able, considering the dates, to take some means from your end to assure that our travelers will not be exposed to dangers similar to those our young missionaries from Eastern Canada met in former years on their way to the Red River.

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<sup>27</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of letters 1855-1863, pp. 18-19.

<sup>28</sup> Father Jean-Joseph Lestanc left alone. Father A. Santoni, Provincial of Montreal, refused to give up the other, already attached to his province, cf. Mazenod to Santoni, October 9, 1855, in *Oblate Writings* 2, p. 106.

<sup>29</sup> Bishop Joseph Crétin of St. Paul, Minnesota.



I give you no news today since I am very occupied with business matters. I will only tell you that O[ur] M[ost] R[everend] Sup[er]ior Gen[eral] continues to enjoy perfect health. He will write to you soon when he sends you the Fathers. Farewell, dear Father Bermond. I don't have to remind you to think of me before God since I like to think that you never forget your former novice master. Farewell again and always consider me as your most sincerely devoted brother in Christo.

C. Aubert

**15 - [To the ex-Oblate Father Charles Pianelli].<sup>30</sup>**

*He is dispensed from his vows in the Congregation. Reproaches for his lack of respect for the Founder.*

Marseilles, June 4, 1855.

Monsieur,

Enclosed I am sending you the dispensation you have been requesting for a long time and which you undoubtedly thought you would obtain more easily by incurring new wrongs. It seemed easier for you to accuse the Congregation and to write insults against its venerable Founder and Sup[er]ior Gen[eral] than to accept the wise plan we adopted in order to put your conscience at ease. I cannot pass judgment on such conduct, but must nevertheless, for the sake of truth, right order and personal honor, energetically condemn the language and sentiments contained in the letter you dared write me. No, Monsieur, the Congregation did not fail you and O[ur] M[ost] R[everend] Sup[er]ior Gen[eral] does not deserve the unworthy reproach you so audaciously leveled against him. If we looked for ways to maintain certain family ties with you, if we granted you what you requested as a natural right in regard to your mother, we preferred that you remain in a position which would greatly facilitate your return to the body of the Congregation from which you are going to separate yourself in the external forum, this was arranged thus only for your benefit and the good of your soul. Don't go imagining that we were at all interested in keeping you among

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<sup>30</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of letters, 1855-1863, pp. 20-21. This letter, done with both rigor and kindness, corresponds well with the manner in which Bishop de Mazenod considered those who were unfaithful to their vows, especially if, besides, they showed signs of ill-will and ingratitude.

us. In truth, what have you done since you have been a member of our spiritual family? What services have you rendered, what works have you accomplished? As I remember, allow me to point out something from the past years which concerns you personally, the embarrassment you gave your superiors, the discomfort you caused your brothers by your difficult character, quick-tempered manner and independence. When you should be most grateful for the excessive charity with which you were treated, you don't hesitate to portray yourself as the accused and victim! That is the way you pay what you owe to the venerable Prelate who is our father and whose white hair, eminent virtues and sacred character ought to have inspired respect in you, even though your heart took no inspiration from him. Thus you pay your debt to the Congregation for having completed your education and giving you all its motherly care and solicitude! So, since you wished it thus, and your bad dispositions in some way have obliged this mother, too patient up to now, to cut you off from the number of her children and grant you freedom, be aware that the responsibility for this measure weighs on your conscience. Even though O[ur] M[ost] R[eve]re[n]d Sup[er]ior Gen[eral] grants you a dispensation from the commitments of your religious profession, he does not mean to legitimize your separation from us, even less to take on himself the consequences which result therefrom before God. That is something which concerns you. The dispensation permitting your return to secular life, relieves the Congregation of a member who belongs to it in body only. Now this last tie is broken and you are no longer one of us.

Monsieur, I have the honor of being your humble servant.

C. Aubert.

**16 - [To Father Julien Baudre at Galveston, Texas].<sup>31</sup>**

*Difficulties at the college; dismissing a lay teacher, inconstancy of the pupils, etc. Impossible to send an English-speaking Father from Europe; Father Olivier will go from Brownsville to Galveston. Courage. Cholera at Marseilles.*

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<sup>31</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of letters 1855-1863, pp. 31-32.

[Marseilles], Oct. 5, 1855.

Reverend and very dear Father,

Our most Reverend Superior General has asked me to reply to your letter of last August in which you explained your situation at Galveston and the difficulties you have in running the college. The troubles caused you by the lay teacher whom you had to dismiss in the end and the impolite manner of conduct on the part of the priests of the bishopric at that time were truly a cause of worry for you so you have really had to have a good dose of patience and strength to put up with it all.

And then the inconstancy of the pupils who have had enough of spending several months in a house of education and the ease with which the parents went along with their game is truly odd. It is right to admit that it isn't encouraging for those who undertake such a work, only to be useful to the country, who at first were promised mountains of marvels. What is just as discouraging is the trouble in finding teachers, especially those who can be counted on, who consecrate themselves seriously to their work and carry it out conscientiously. However, it seems that there should be some young men in the United States who have received a classical education who can be hired for an institute such as yours. You had a good idea in writing to the Archbishop of New York<sup>32</sup> in this regard. No doubt he will have found what you asked of him.

This approach is that much more suitable because you can count only on a meagre support of the Congregation, and, as it happens, that this year we cannot furnish you with any. You know that in place of a priest of English or Irish origin, we had planned on sending you an Oblate scholastic whom we sent to England two years ago and whom we thought apt to render you service in teaching English and Latin in your college. However, when I recently made a canonical visitation of our English province, I was able to ascertain myself that Brother Mourier (the name of this Oblate) didn't know the language well enough as would be needed at Galveston but also that he had no teaching ability. You suggest, it is true, that we send you Brother Ryan<sup>33</sup> who is Irish and should know English which he learnt as a child, but you do

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<sup>32</sup> Archbishop John Hughes of New York.

<sup>33</sup> Father Timothy Jean-Marie Ryan.

not take into consideration certain reasons that prevent us from being able to send him even for a year or two. That is because he was precisely sent to England to be busy in giving classes in that Province's novitiate where there are still several young English and Irish men whom we are preparing to later on receive in the Congregation. So, it is impossible to send you the promised help this year from Europe. Our most Reverend Superior General, however, didn't want to leave you in such a miserable state so he turned his glance to America to see if there was anyone among us whom he could give you at this time. The mentioned Reverend Father Trudeau would certainly be suitable for your requirements under several aspects; but this Father is engaged in the college of Bytown whose Bishop is a member of the Congregation. It is someone he wants most to hold onto. Judge for yourself if there is any hope of pulling him away. There remained no other source but to look elsewhere, closer to yourself, which is what our beloved Father decided to do. Consequently, he wrote to Reverend Father Verdet, superior of the house at Brownsville, to send you Father Olivier who had previously been destined for your college. With the help of this Father who is said to be able to teach and must know English passably well, you will be able to handle the situation since I have no doubt as well that, if you pay them, you would find lay teachers. The expenses you would incur in paying them would undoubtedly diminish your income, but how do other establishments of this kind do it? I presume you would have enough to cover your current expenses. As to the debts remaining from construction of furnishings for the college buildings, the allocation for this year which we requested for you from the Propagation of the Faith will place about fifteen thousand francs at your disposition, nothing to sneeze at. So you see, dear Father, there is no reason to be discouraged. In spite of the difficulties facing you, there are still good hopes for this work in the future. Besides, you would be mistaken to blame yourself for the failure of this enterprise, supposing it does not succeed. Everyone knows well that you have done all that was necessary and even more. It is not a compliment but only just to add that you have succeeded more than one could have expected, seeing the weak tools with which you had to function and the thousand obstacles to overcome. So, no one, whether in the Congregation or outside, will be tempted to direct any blame at you no matter what happens.

Our most Reverend Superior General, in whose name I am writing, especially charges me to tell you he approves all you have done and blesses you to keep on in the same way.

In conclusion, there remains only for me to let you know that we all are well in spite of the cholera which has broken out again in Marseilles. How are you people being treated by that terrible yellow fever which threatens your city every year? Everything is as usual in our houses. At the first occasion you will receive a printed account of the Congregation similar to the one of last year and I hope it will offer you some interesting details as well. Farewell, very dear Father Baudre. Please extend my best wishes to all our good Fathers at Galveston.

Your very devoted brother in Christo.

C. Aubert, O.M.I. Provincial.

**17 - [To Bishop Bernard Buissas of Limoges].<sup>34</sup>**

*Father Joseph Bise has been named Superior of the Oblate community at Limoges and Father Charles Bellon Provincial of the northern French Province.*

[Marseilles], October 15, 1855.

Your Excellency,

Today, I am writing you on behalf of Our Most Reverend Superior General to inform you of the appointment of the new superior for the community of Oblates of Mary at Limoges. Reverend Father Bise has been definitively invested with this charge. This Father has already been in the house for some time, is beginning to know the country, is old enough and has experience. So, there is every hope that he will do well both in governing the community and in giving direction to the works which serve the city and the Limoges diocese.

It's true that Reverend Father Vincens spoke of another person and had even promised him as superior. But compelling reasons have arisen to keep him at Marseilles. Thus, he had to consider naming someone else.

I also must give your Excellency official notice of a change related to the administration of the Province to which our community at Limoges belongs. Reverend Father Vincens has just been replaced as

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<sup>34</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of letters, 1855-1863, p. 32.

Provincial by Reverend Father Bellon who lives at Romans (Drôme), where he is Superior of the Major Seminary. As it is the Provincial who must regularly communicate with Bishops for important matters regarding houses of the Congregation located in their dioceses, it is proper and a duty to inform your Excellency of this change. Due to this circumstance, I have the honor of writing you today in my role as General Secretary of the Congregation of Oblates of Mary. I am pleased, Your Excellency, to thus have the occasion of renewing my acquaintance with a Prelate who was kind enough to show me consideration when I passed through Limoges returning from England five years ago, and whose memory has always remained engraved in my heart since that time.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the homage, etc.

C. Aubert, Provincial O.M.I.

**18 - [To Father François-Xavier Michelier].<sup>35</sup>**

*Reproaches Father Michelier for his bad conduct. The Superior General forgives him for his faults and invites him to come back to the Aix community.*

[Marseilles], January 12, 1856.

Reverend Father,

Some things in this world seem so strange that one can scarcely believe them and present such a distressing character that one would certainly wish never to have gotten embroiled in them. Such is your truly inconceivable conduct which leaves us all in a cruel incertitude, to which it is high time to see an end. I will not reconsider the unfortunate affair at Vico, not because I want to excuse the very grave faults which still weigh heavily on you, but since our Most Reverend Superior General has promised pardon, I do not want to withdraw from you the benefit of that merciful act on his part. So, I will talk only about what has happened since then. Has anyone ever seen conduct like that you followed when leaving the house at Aix to return to your parents without the necessary permission? And to aggravate your mistakes even

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<sup>35</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of letters 1855-1863, pp. 46-47. Through letters of April 10, 1856 and January 18, 1857, Father Aubert asked Father Michelier to go and make a week-long retreat, after which the Superior General would release him from his commitments. Then he would fall under the jurisdiction of the Ordinary of his original diocese. *Ibid.*, pp. 57 and 86-87.

more, if that were possible, you didn't have the courtesy to reply to your local superior, Reverend Father Courtès, the first to write to you, handing on to you my letter written at the time you asked to go home. Even more, you seem to be trying to put up some kind of barrier between yourself and the Congregation by not letting us know either directly or indirectly what has become of you and how we can get in touch with you, to such a point that if we want to know positively where you are, we would have to do so by guessing and by using information sought from and provided by strangers. And it is almost three months that you have taken up such a position and appear disposed to peacefully continue on as if nothing had happened. Really, that goes beyond permission. What would you have done more, if you had wanted to sever the sacred bonds that unite you to the Congregation and hasn't your conduct already been a veritable apostasy which places you in an habitual state of sin? I must not hide from you that my present effort is a pure act of mercy and a final grace offered you by your mother the Congregation which you have so deeply grieved. If we had followed the first impulse which your conduct spontaneously gave rise to, if we had wanted to treat you according to what you deserve, you would already be erased from the number of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the letter I'm writing you today would be nothing more than a notification of that sad sentence rendered against you. Fortunately for you, in this struggle between justice and mercy, a fatherly heart, scarcely like any other, intervened in your behalf. Our Most Reverend Father General had pity on you and obtained mercy from his Council. How terrible it would be for you if you reject his advance by not corresponding generously to the pardon he offers you! You would then have to blame yourself and merit to see applied to you in all its rigor the extreme measure provoked by yourself. But no. I trust that it will not be such and that my letter which brings you words of reconciliation will be received by you as a heavenly message. You will seriously examine yourself, if you have not already done so. You will eagerly take hold of the plank which remains for you after the shipwreck, I mean a prompt return to your community with your brothers. I will be waiting to receive very shortly a letter from you announcing that good news. It would be a double satisfaction for me if it informs me that you are on the point of taking the road back to your community at Aix to which you are attached and that to get there you will be taking the road through Marseilles where you can be assured of receiving a warm and most merciful welcome from our beloved father.

C. Aubert, O.M.I.

**19 - [To Father Julien Baudre at Galveston, Texas].<sup>36</sup>**

*Regret at learning that Father H. de Lustrac was sent to the college instead of Father Olivier. Invitation to courage while waiting to receive a director, an experienced British subject. News: Brother Camper's illness, the Founder's good health, satisfactory state of the scholasticate and novitiate, Brother J. Charvin's death, etc.*

[Marseilles] January 15, 1856.

Reverend and very dear Father,

Before replying to your last letter addressed to Our Most Reverend Superior General, I was waiting daily to receive a few lines from Reverend Father Verdet in reply to the one I wrote to him, telling him to send you Father Olivier. That reply has finally arrived and I assure you that we were greatly surprised to learn through Reverend Father Verdet himself that, instead of Father Olivier, he gave you Father de Lustrac for Galveston. I just wrote again that if this substitution has not yet been made, Father Olivier should be sent and not the other, for the very simple reason that this Father knows English better and is more apt to respond to the need which requires attention. It is even a sorry matter that Reverend Father Verdet, undoubtedly basing himself on reasons of need for his own establishment, has kept Father Olivier at Brownsville. Besides, what could you do in the meanwhile, with all the hindrances and obstacles you had to face at the moment when courses were just recommencing at your college? According to what you said in your letters the outlook was certainly not favorable. Here, we can't imagine how Reverend Father Verdet, who knew all that, was able to defer even for a moment sending you immediately the indispensable help you were awaiting which he alone could give. It is very clear that it is impossible to still hope for it from Europe, at least for this year, since you know that we would not have failed to provide you with it before the return to classes, if it had been possible to find the man you were requesting, either in France or England. So we are really disturbed on your account, and even though we knew that you were not a man easily discouraged, we were somewhat fearful, due to the possible outcome of your affairs and the present state of your college enterprise. We like to flatter our-

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<sup>36</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, pp. 45-46.



selves with the thought that you have set out, trying to keep your effort going in spite of all the difficulties and insufficient materials at your disposal, in a word, that hope kept you alive. If that is the case, you have given proof of more than ordinary courage, for which the Congregation should praise you, and God will not fail to reward you. I already see beginning for what I am saying here in the arrangement which is being prepared, which will allow us to send you, for the direction of your college, not only an Oblate who knows English, but one of our Fathers, a British subject, a man of talent and experience who possess all that is needed to help you place your work on a solid basis and continue from there.<sup>37</sup> As soon as it has been decided, (probably within a month) I will let you know so as to free you from uncertainty and put you in a position to proceed. While waiting, you will try to survive as best as possible with the help sent from Brownsville. Please do not forget to write us as soon as you receive my letter to reassure us about the present state of things and keep us up to date on your affairs, whether concerning your college or the Bishop's office; you must understand how much we always eagerly long to receive one of your letters, but now more than ever.

I certainly do not want to conclude my short conversation with you, very dear Father, without giving you some news that may interest you concerning our Congregation. We are all fine here, thanks be to God, except an Oblate Brother, a charming person in every way, whom heaven undoubtedly wishes to remove from our midst any day now.<sup>38</sup> Our very dear Father General continues to enjoy that strength of mind and bodily vigor with which you are acquainted, which promises us many more years of his affectionate and dedicated service and the joy of his presence. All is going well at the Oblate house at Montolivet both as regards piety and studies. We have more than thirty young men there, preparing themselves to worthily carry out various ministries proper to our holy vocation.

Likewise, the rather numerous and well-formed novitiate at Osier is functioning very satisfactorily. At Marseilles and in our other houses in France things are going as usual and God's blessings accompany the

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<sup>37</sup> Father J.B.H. Naughten, cf. Mazenod to Baudre, February 28, 1956, in *Oblate Writings I*, vol. 2, pp. 118-119.

<sup>38</sup> The scholastic, François Marie Camper, died on January 19, 1856 at Montolivet.

endeavours of our Fathers. News coming from our different foreign missions is rather consoling. Farewell, dear Father Baudre, my sincere greetings to all our Fathers and Brothers at Galveston.

Your very devoted brother in Christ.

C. Aubert, priest, O.M.I.

P.S. One of our Oblate Brothers just recently died.<sup>39</sup> The Fathers in your house must offer a Mass for him and the Brothers one Holy Communion, besides the suffrages for eight days.

You are aware that it has been decided that when you have no Mass intentions, you can offer at the intention of the Procurator General. You can indicate the number said in your next letter.

**20 - [To Father Jacques Santoni, Provincial at Montreal].<sup>40</sup>**

*As soon as possible, carry out the elections for the delegate from the houses and from the Province for the General Chapter in August. At that time we will take a decision regarding the proposed establishment at Bytown.*

[Marseilles], May 5, 1856.

Reverend Father, I am enclosing with this letter a copy of the circular of convocation for the next General Chapter that O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Father Superior has commissioned me to send you. Even though this missive traces in some detail the procedure to be followed by Provincials and Vicars of Mission, whether for the running of the Provincial chapter or for matters preceding it, that is, for special house meetings, nevertheless, I think it useful to speak a little with you on this topic, not concerning the steps you are to take but relating to other circumstances. First of all, I must indicate that you have no time to lose. You will receive the letter of convocation at the end of this month and it would be good if you arrive at Marseilles a little before the Chapter, that is, sometime in the last two weeks of July. So, you have only June to carry out all the activities relating to the election of a delegate from your

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<sup>39</sup> Joseph Charvin died on December 10, 1855 at Limoges.

<sup>40</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, p. 63.

Province to the General Chapter. Now, it seems to me that for such to happen you have only to divide the month into two stages. In the first, after having indicated by a circular letter the time and place for holding your Provincial Chapter, you will have each house choose a local delegate for that Chapter and, in the second, you will gather around you all the delegates and superiors of all the houses in order to proceed with the election of the representative that your Province has the right to send to the General Chapter. Meanwhile you could arrange everything for your immediate departure and for that of your elected delegate, which should take place at the beginning of July, doing so by steam-ship, the most trustworthy and shortest without being too expensive.

As to the question of the last plan for an establishment at Bytown, presented by Bishop Guigues on which your Council has made some observations, that O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General has submitted to his assistants, with the Bishop of Bytown's letter, since you see there are only some slight changes to be made, according to your advice, which seemed advantageous as well to you, here we thought that there would be some way to arrive at a mutual agreement between yourselves and Bishop Guigues. That lets you know that O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General and his Council regard this affair as finalized. We don't however, at this moment, want to give you the official decision. Since the time for the General Chapter is very near, it is better to put off the final conclusion of this matter to a time which, offering an occasion to converse face to face, will bring together the most favorable conditions to explain everything in detail and to arrive at a result satisfactory to both parties after sufficient examination and discussion.

Please accept, Reverend Father, the sincere expression, etc.

C. Aubert, P[rie]st, Secret[ary], O.M.I.

**21 - [To the ex-Oblate Father, Jacques-François Didier].<sup>41</sup>**

*The dispensation from his vows has already been granted two years ago. The General Council will not allow him to come back into the Congregation which still loves him and prays for him. May he be a good priest in the world.*

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<sup>41</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, p. 65.

[Marseilles], May 26, 1856.

Sir and dear brother, the Bishop of Marseilles, Our M[ost] R[eve]nd Superior General, has designated me to reply for him to the letter which you just wrote him relative to the abnormal position in which you realize you find yourself, but which is not difficult to regularize. It is enough to let you know, or rather to recall to you, what has happened in your regard. Two years ago, when you came back from Canada, where it was evident from both sides that you could not remain, you addressed a request to O[ur] M[ost] R[eve]nd Father, that you had already made in America, to be relieved of your vows so as to be able to leave the Congregation. In the meanwhile you sought refuge in the Great Chartreuse which you gave as your address. Upon this request and after the report of the Reverend Father Provincial of Canada, O[ur] M[ost] R[eve]nd Superior General submitted your case to his Council's deliberation. There it was unanimously decided that you were in the situation foreseen in the Rule which says that a subject may be dispensed from his religious obligations when it has been recognized that he is not fit to do good in the Congregation. The M[ost] R[eve]nd Superior General was asked to grant you a dispensation from your vows and set you at liberty. That decision must have been sent you at that time and, if it did not get to you, the cause must be attributed to the fact that you had no fixed domicile at that time. It would have been possible to dissipate this incertitude sooner by taking the natural recourse of writing, which you finally did, to find out your actual situation.

What can I say to you now and what should be done? Since you are, in fact, dispensed from your commitment to the Congregation and since besides, according to your own statement, the reasons for granting your dispensation still exist in the same way, O[ur] M[ost] R[eve]nd Superior General considers that it is not wise to take any action to have you return. For that, it would be necessary to obtain from his Council a verdict of reintegration which, according to every appearance, would not be granted you. What you must do then, is to resign yourself to your situation and fulfill as faithfully as possible in the world the duties of your state, living as a good priest and spreading around you the good odor of Jesus Christ, if you are not able to work directly for the salvation of souls. The Congregation of Oblates of Mary will always have regard for you with the charity which you recognize. It will continue to have you

share in its prayers and good works before God. It always does so for former members who maintain a good attitude toward it as you do.

Please accept, etc.

C. Aubert, P[rie]st, O.M.I. Secretary.

**22 - Reverend Father Fouquet, O.M.I., at the Major Seminary in Ajaccio.<sup>42</sup>**

*The Father may come to Marseilles with the seminarian who wants to enter novitiate.*

L.J.C et M.I.

Marseilles, June 12, 1856.

Reverend and very dear Father,

When Our Most Reverend Superior General left for Paris where he went for the baptism of the royal baby, he asked me to reply for him to the letter you wrote him relative to the cleric in the Major Seminary who has asked you to enter the Congregation.<sup>43</sup> Our beloved Father considers that the signs of a vocation in this young man are more than sufficient to admit him to undergo testing at novitiate. The care that you have taken not to influence him and the time you have taken to carefully examine this delicate question are enough evidence to prove that his choice concerning the Congregation is the result neither of imagination nor human inspiration but that it comes from God. Once this important point has been determined, there is nothing more to consider and there would even be something to fear that, in deferring his entrance among us, this cleric might even expose his vocation to obstacles and difficulties which might cause him to lose it. So, it is better that he go from the Major seminary to the novitiate without going on holidays among his relatives. In that way he will avoid the inconvenience of having to deal with possible opposition from them and will have gained several months by starting his religious life sooner. You will thus do well to plan things with him so that he is ready at the end of the month when your students

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<sup>42</sup> Orig.: Ottawa, Deschâtelets Archives, HPK 5263. F77Z 3.

<sup>43</sup> Undoubtedly Antoine-Martin Battesti, a young Corsican who entered novitiate in June, 1856.

leave the seminary and you will be able to bring him with you from Ajaccio to Marseilles. That is the thinking of our Most Reverend Superior General, so please act in accordance with it.

I will say no more today since I find myself a bit busy with my always growing numerous occupations. Besides, it's not worth discussing anything by mail, since we will soon have the advantage of speaking face to face. While waiting for that moment I look forward to with real pleasure, give my best wishes to all our Fathers at Ajaccio and please accept the assurance of my sincere regards as your very devoted brother in Christo.

C. Aubert, P[rie]st, O.M.I. Provincial.

**23 - Reverend Father Tempier, Superior of the Oblates of Mary at Notre Dame de Montolivet, near Marseilles.<sup>44</sup>**

*Convocation of the Chapter for the Midi Province. Instructions for electing the delegate.*

Marseilles, June 14, 1856.

Reverend Father,

Our M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General just addressed a circular letter to me in which he indicated that the holding of the General Chapter for our Congregation will take place during the first week of next August and convoked at the same time the Fathers who have the right to take part in it. Thus, each Provincial is required to gather the Province Chapter in good time to elect the delegate to be sent to the General Chapter. Consequently, we have decided to convoke, and do so by the present letter, the chapter of our 1st French Province, which is to be hold on July 17th, and designate as the most suitable place for this meeting our house of Le Calvaire at Marseilles.

You know that all the Superiors of our houses in the Province have the right to take part in the Provincial Chapter; so Reverend Father, you don't need a further convocation notice beyond this present circular.

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<sup>44</sup> Orig.: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, p. 67. A circular sent to the superiors of the Midi Province. The copy meant for Father Tempier was inserted and pasted into the register of letters 1855-1863.

But, besides the local superior, each house has the right to send a delegate to the Provincial Chapter, and for this election we deem it necessary to give some instructions so that it is carried out in perfect conformity with what is said in our Constitutions.

First of all, concerning the time for the capitular assembly, where each house in the Province will elect its delegate, it is sufficient that it be done during the present month, on the most convenient day. Here is the format to be followed in the election of the local delegate. On the day of the assembly, the Superior of the house will celebrate the Mass *de Spiritu Sancto* which the whole community will attend.

After that, the local Superior and all the Oblate priests of the house will go to the meeting room, where, after reciting the hymn *Veni Creator* and a few words addressed by the Superior on the purpose of this reunion, they will proceed to the election as follows. Each of those present by turn will write on his ballot the name of the Father he chooses as delegate to the Provincial Chapter and, after folding the ballot, will place it in the urn on the desk around which the Superior and his two Assessors are seated. Once all the Fathers present have voted, the local Superior with his Assessors will count the number of the ballots which should be neither more nor less than the number of voters. He then reads them out loud, taking care to give them also to his Assessors to read, who will each write on another list the number of votes which are shared among those elected. The two lists will then be compared to see if they agree and, once this agreement has been ascertained, all that remains is to proclaim as elected the one who has received the most votes. If he has received the absolute majority, that is, more than half the votes, he is recognized as the delegate of the house to the Provincial Chapter. If he has obtained only a relative majority and a simple plurality of votes, you proceed to a second election which includes only those who have received several votes on the first ballot. If this 2nd election also produces someone with only a plurality of votes, you must continue once more and the result of this 3rd election, even if it does not result in someone with an absolute majority, will be considered definitive and the one elected who has the simple plurality of votes. He will be proclaimed the legitimate delegate of the house to the Provincial Chapter. In case of a tie in the voting, start the election all over, and if there is still a tie, the oldest by oblation between the two candidates will be chosen and proclaimed delegate.

Once the election is completed, record the meeting, with all present, in the register for the meetings of the house council, and all members of the assembly are to sign it.

A copy of this statement, taken from the original and duly authenticated, will be given to the house delegate to use as his canonical title to be presented to the Provincial Chapter.

I have nothing more, R[everend] Father, except to recommend that you pray and have others pray insistantly to the God of lights and mercy to deign to let his most abundant graces flow over the whole Congregation and, in particular, on all those who are to make up the General Chapter so that this solemn occasion might be for everyone a time of spiritual renewal and heavenly blessings. We can do nothing better than to quote you the words with which O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General concluded his letters of convocation addressed to Provincials and Vicars of the Congregation.

*Tandem vos enixe hortamur RR.PP. ut in sua quisque Provincia aut vicariatu preces ad Deum omnipotentem devote effundendas prescribat, ut ea quae a Patre luminum descendit sapientia, omnium qui ad Capitulum generale aderunt mentes adimpleat. In eo enim agendum erit gravibus de negotiis et quaedam haud parvi momenti statuenda, quae ad bonum totius nostrae Congregationis, ejus extensionem, et imprimis illius in disciplina regulari profectum attinent.*

*Faxit Deus, ut, sub auspiciis B. et Im. Virginis Mariae, cujus ab omni labe immunitas nos glorioso nomine inter religiosos Ordines designat, atque sub patrocinio B. Joseph protectoris nostri amantissimi, haec prima Capituli generalis, post dogmaticam Im. Conceptionis Deiparae definitionem coadunatio ad ipsius Omnipotentis gloriam, ad animarum lucrum et ad totius Congregationis nostrae incrementum proficiat.*

Please accept, Reverend Father, the assurance of my sincere affection with which I remain your very humble and devoted brother in Xto,

C. Aubert, O.M.I. P[rie]st, Provincial.

**24 - [To Father Tempier, Superior of the scholasticate of Montolivet].<sup>45</sup>**

*Acts of the Canonical Visitation.*

<sup>45</sup> Orig.: AGR, Montolivet file, France-Midi.



L.J.C. et M.I.

Marseilles, July 16, 1856.

Reverend Father,

The visit I have just completed during the last few days to the house of Montolivet provides me with the occasion of a short official communication which I take the liberty of sending you in letter form.

By right, I might have composed an act of Visitation which I could have put down in writing in one of your registers. But since the several recommendations that I have to make for the good of the house are few in number and not of a serious nature, I thought it better not to give them too much solemnity but to send you a short note to sum up the results of my observations during the visit. Here are the main points:

1 – Some exercises of the Rule or custom such as the *coulpe*, the instruction to be given every second week, reading of the canons of General Chapters are not carried out regularly enough at prescribed times.

2 – House business is not treated with enough proper administrative procedure, local councils seem to exist only on paper. Considerable expenses are incurred without having been discussed in council. The quarterly reports of the printed register for the house finances are not in proper order. For the first year, the signature of one of the local assessors is missing.

3 – The exercise of monthly direction with the local Superior is not being done for the Fathers nor for the lay Brothers.

4 – Neither do the professors receive direction for classes. From this derives that there is no systematic teaching properly speaking, no unity in course materials nor a uniform method.

5 – The professors have not kept an interest in their classes, which have been allowed to languish, either by giving too much time to simple recitation or by not stimulating enough questions from the students.

6 – Not enough care and attention have been given to church singing so that most of the students have learnt nothing from this class.

7 – The Fathers serve at table too rarely. The Fathers also attend breviary very rarely on days when it is in common for those in Sacred Orders or for Oblates in Minor Orders. The custom of giving subject

matter for meditation twice a week, which had been established according to a rule traced out by our Most Reverend Superior General for our Major Seminaries, has been abandoned.

8 – There have been many health problems this year. Could not part of the cause if not the entire cause be: 1 - a system, followed up to the present, of keeping the Oblates all day long in the same room, without a change of air, and where the stove, when it is lit, gives off a lot of carbonic acid; 2 - the Lenten food menu which is not nourishing enough due to the kind of meals, almost exclusively vegetable; 3 - Generally there is not enough meat in proportion to the number of Oblate scholastics at table, which is easy to prove from the monthly report where meat expenses are much lower than those for bread, when they should be at least equal if not more, according to the present prices of these food items.

That, Reverend Father, summarizes the results of the observations which I had occasion to gather during the visit to the house of Montolivet. Since it is the local Superior who must put into effect the Visitor's recommendations, I am addressing them to you, leaving it to your wisdom and love of regularity to choose the simplest and most efficacious manner of doing so.

Please accept, Reverend Father, the assurance of my respect and sincere affection with which I remain your very devoted brother in Christo.

C. Aubert, Priest, O.M.I. Provincial.

P.S. I am enclosing the letter convocation for the Provincial Chapter which is to take place on Monday, the 21st of this month.

**25 - [To Bishop Casanelli d'Istria of Ajaccio].<sup>46</sup>**

*Father Santoni will replace Father Magnan as Superior of the Major Seminary of Ajaccio. We are going to send a director and a professor to the clerical school at Vico.*

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<sup>46</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, p. 71.

[Marseilles], August 24, 1856.

Your Excellency,

Today, I want to inform you of a resolution we have been obliged to take in regard to the community of our Fathers entrusted with your Major Seminary. Your Excellency is no doubt aware that Reverend Father Magnan's health has undergone a rather considerable change, especially in the last while. Already last year the doctors on the continent whom he consulted informed him that staying in Ajaccio could well be one cause of his illness. Nevertheless, we wanted to have him experience it for another year, but this new trial only confirmed the results of those in preceding years. Reverend Father Magnan was more played out than ever to such a degree that at the end of the courses at the last semester, he was unable to carry on the main duties of his office as Superior. In such a state of affairs, and after the decision of the doctors consulted once more, it was necessary to withdraw Father Magnan from the post he held at Ajaccio and name a successor. That is what has just been done and for which, Your Excellency, I ask for your approval. The man who is to replace Father Magnan has everything required to do so to good advantage. He is a native of Corsica and possesses all the qualities needed to carry out his assigned duties. In fact, Your Excellency should be aware that Reverend Father Santoni, whom I am introducing to you as Superior of your seminary, is as distinguished for his virtues as he is for his talents. He has fulfilled confidential positions in the Congregation and has just spent five years in Canada as Provincial. So, we have every reason to believe that we can all congratulate ourselves on this choice.

I can also gladly inform Your Excellency that, wishing to fully conform to your views relative to the school at Vico, we are sending you two men, one to carry out the duties of director and the other those of professor. The first is a man of experience in this regard, having been in charge of a secondary establishment for ecclesiastical studies for many years.<sup>47</sup> The second has also been employed in teaching.

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<sup>47</sup> Father J.-A. Brun. Already a priest when he entered the Congregation, he was for three years principal of a small college at La Ciotat. We do not know who was sent there as professor at that time.

I do not wish to end my letter, Your Excellency, without imploring you to accept my sincere gratitude for the kindness you have shown me in the communications I have had with you, especially on the occasion of my recent visit to our houses in Corsica. I continue to nourish very fond memories of it.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the homage, etc.

C. Aubert, P[rie]st, O.M.I. Provincial.

**26 - [To the community superiors of the France-Midi- Province].<sup>48</sup>**

*Circular letter to announce the death of Father Joseph S. Andrieux and recall the obligation of suffrages.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Marseilles, September 8, 1857

Reverend Father,

With sadness I announce the loss our Congregation has just suffered in the person of Reverend Father Joseph Siffren Andrieux who died at Marseilles on the 2nd of this month after a rather long chest ailment to which he succumbed at the age of 29. He had been in vows for eight years and the priesthood five years. Everything seemed to heighten our regret even more for this dear departed whom it pleased God to call to himself by a premature death. He possessed most apt qualities to make him an accomplished subject; a joyful character, outstanding talent, sincere piety and perfect fidelity to the obligations of religious life. His ardent zeal for the glory of God went so far as to make him oblivious to be concerned for his weak health and we can say that in some way he died a victim to the sacred zeal for souls which consumed him. Abundant blessings accompanied the several attempts at apostolic ministry he carried out in the first years of his priestly life. However, God was satisfied with the first fruits of the harvest of this young worker and allowed a premature death to stop him at the beginning of a very promising and consoling career.

During the rather long illness which carried him to the grave, Father Andrieux was never beneath the high degree of virtue which always underlies true zeal in the exercise of holy ministry.

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<sup>48</sup> Orig.: AGR, J.S. Andrieux file.

He was noted especially for an unshakeable patience in the midst of the sufferings and weariness which go along with this kind of illness. His love for Our Lord Jesus Christ and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary seemed to grow daily in the measure that he approached the end of his mortal existence. Being able to celebrate daily Mass was one of his greatest consolations and he willingly sacrificed taking anything after midnight to ease the burning fever which consumed him so as to enjoy the privilege of going to the altar which he did up to the very last days when he no longer had the strength to stand on his feet. He was still able to savor this consolation on Sunday, August 30, three days before he died.

The day after, even though he had kept himself prepared for the same good fortune, he found himself so weak when he got up that he had to renounce saying Mass. But this privation moved his heart so sensibly that he was sad about it all day long and continually talked about it tearfully. With these holy dispositions and feelings of heroic piety, he came to his last hour and crossed from this land of exile into the welcome of the eternal fatherland.

When you inform the members of your community of this sad news, please remind them of the duties to our dear departed the Rule imposes in such circumstances.

Please accept, Reverend Father, the assurance of sincere wishes with which I remain your very devoted brother in Christo.

C. Aubert, priest, O.M.I. Prov[incial].

**27 - [To Father François-Xavier Bermond, at Saint Boniface].<sup>49</sup>**

*Father Pascal Ricard has returned to France for health reasons. The reasons for and the purpose of Father Bermond's obedience as Extraordinary Visitor to the Oblates in Oregon.*

[Marseilles, September 9, 1857].

Dear Father Bermond, I am continuing O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General's letter to give you some necessary explanations on his behalf.

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<sup>49</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, pp. 116-117. The letter was started by Bishop de Mazenod, cf. *Oblate Writings* 2, p. 156.

First of all, you know that Father Ricard has, for health reasons, been recalled from Oregon and up to the present has not been replaced in his duties as Vicar of Missions. It is true that one of the Fathers from that Vicariate, d'Herbomez, was named interim Superior with the title of Visitor. But, let it be said among ourselves, this good Father, in spite of his incontestable qualities, does not have the confidence of all his men which gives rise to the fear that there might be two camps in that poor vicariate, one for and one against this Father. Such being the case and considering our very insufficient information as to the real situation, it has become necessary to send a truly unbiased Father who is able, because of his age, experience and dedication, to set things in order and remedy the several difficulties which may be present. Now, O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General's council has set eyes on you, convinced that you possess everything required to fulfill this mission, trusting that you will be fully disposed to accept it.

So, after a little rest at Montreal after your tiring journey, you will set out for New York where steamboats take passengers as far as San Francisco in California, from where there is a regular service to Oregon. Our Fathers have their main house at *Olympia* on *Puget Bay* in that part of the country called *Washington Territory*. That is where you must go. Once you have arrived, you will announce the reason for your presence and, to support your claim, produce the enclosed document which is authentic proof of your mission. Besides that, we are going to write simultaneously to the Fathers of the Oregon Vicariate about the measure taken in their regard, informing them, at the same time, of your arrival among them, letting them know directly of the mission you are to carry out.

You understand that it is not just a matter of discerning the true state of things and the attitudes in our Oregon Vicariate, but to remedy the difficulties that you will find there. For that you need enough time, at least till next summer. O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General is intent on giving you only a temporary mission; but, if after you have seen and examined everything, you consider your presence to be necessary for a longer time and are disposed to devote yourself to the vicariate's wellbeing, there would be nothing easier than to change your title from *Extraordinary Visitor* to that of regularly appointed *Vicar*. This might be understood easier in future letters.

There remains only the financial question. I think that an additional hundred louis will suffice for your traveling expenses. You will receive

them from the Province of Canada which will only advance what is to be reimbursed by Marseilles from the Oregon fund. To this effect, I will write to my brother whom you will meet in Montreal and who will remit you the forementioned sum. Farewell, very dear Father Bermond. Be assured of my sincere affection as I remain your very devoted brother in Xto and M.I.

C. Aubert, O.M.I. P[riest], Assistant Secretary General.

**28 - [To Bishop Casanelli d'Istria of Ajaccio].<sup>50</sup>**

*The Oblates are sending two more professors for the minor seminary at Vico but the diocese must pay 2000 francs a year. At the Major Seminary of Ajaccio Father Pierre Richard will replace Father Léon Fouquet.*

Marseilles, September 17, 1857.

Your Excellency,

I owe you an apology for my delay in replying to your honorable letter of the middle of last July, but it did not get to me in England until during August. I was waiting to make this reply until I returned from the recent trip I took in company with the Bishop of Marseilles which lasted more than two months. So today I plan on accomplishing this duty which I always carry out very willingly in your regard. Without further ado, I will get to the heart of the matter. It is not at all my intention to propose myself as an adversary in discussing with you, Your Excellency, and even less to wish imposing on you some arbitrary conditions in all that pertains to the question of the Minor Seminary at Vico. Could it be possible that we would have opposing views in such a matter? Do we not have similar interest in seeing this work go forward successfully, always improving? You more than our Congregation. For it is really a diocesan work, and to Your Excellency is due the initiative for this undertaking, as it was due to your solicitude that it survived the difficulties of the first years. Allow me now to recall to Your Excellency what I had the honor of saying personally during my last visit to Corsica. I was on the spot and carefully examined the financial state of that house. As justly as I could, I balanced the expenses and resources

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<sup>50</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, pp. 118-119.

and arrived at the conclusion that the school could not go ahead unless we added to the amount from student fees an annual subsidy of 2000 francs. That conclusion becomes even more evident through the fact of the increase in teaching personnel, an increase one must encourage if one wants this establishment based on proper footing and a solid foundation. That is why I requested Your Excellency to apply to the school at Vico the 2000 francs annually retained from the Minor Seminary burses for the benefit of the campaign. If this expedient is not admissible and if, on the other hand, we can't count on this subsidy from the resources at the Major Seminary, I do not intend to place Your Excellency in an impossible situation. All that I ask is that it be recognized that something must be done to help Vico, leaving the manner of how this be done to Your Excellency's well-known solicitude for this school and your most paternal consideration for our Fathers. I have now fulfilled my duty to the requests of these good Fathers, particularly Reverend Father Brun, who came to the continent for this express purpose. I am sending you two more professors<sup>51</sup> for the school at Vico, one of whom will be assigned to Philosophy since we are rightly convinced that we should offer this course at Vico so that students are able to go directly to the Major Seminary the following year.

In conclusion, I entrust to your Excellency's kindness and wisdom the proper manner of supplying the necessary help needed at Vico. I avoid entirely going into any details in all that concerns those paragraphs in Your Excellency's letter which speak of the claims made by the Minor Seminary against the Major Seminary, the sums furnished by the campaign, and where my calculations of the presumed necessary expenses for the establishment of Vico are treated a little too severely, in my opinion. It would not be proper to do so here, it suffices for me to express my reservations regarding all that so that it cannot be said: *qui tacet consentire videtur*.

There is one more matter to communicate to you, which I believe Reverend Father Santoni left to my initiative. It is a minor change in the personnel of professors at your Major Seminary, a measure forced on us by necessity. I say necessity since, when a man complains that his health

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<sup>51</sup> Possibly Fathers J.P. Visidari and P.H. Emm. Bordet, ordained in 1857. These two Fathers are found in the personnel of the house in 1858.



is in danger in such a position, and experience proves that these difficulties are real and would end up rendering him incapable of doing anything, we have to consent to his change as a necessary measure. That is what has taken place in regard to Reverend Father Fouquet, so he must be replaced at your seminary. To replace him we will send you Reverend Father Richard who will be pleased to meet Your Excellency as soon as possible at Ajaccio. I hope that you will be satisfied with this man. He will not directly succeed Father Fouquet. The Superior felt that the dogma class would be better handled by Reverend Father Pompéi whom Father Fouquet will replace in the duties of treasurer and in a secondary course. Before concluding, there remains space for two lines to review my sentiments of sincere gratitude whether for your kindness to our Fathers or for the personal attentions with which you have often honored me.

Please accept, Your Excellency, etc...

C. Aubert, O.M.I. Prov[incial].

**29 - [To Father Robert Marie Cooke, Provincial of the Oblates in England].<sup>52</sup>**

*He can come to visit a house for closed retreats in France. Build only the Oblate house in Dublin; the church and retreat house will come later. The abbé Suffield can make his first year of novitiate in his parish. Brother Carrey's departure.*

[Marseilles], January 2, 1858.

Reverend Father,

I hasten to profit by a few free moments to reply to the most pressing matters of your last two letters. First of all, I can tell you that O[ur] M[ost] R[everend] Superior General has no objection to your making the trip you spoke about to visit the retreat house whose program and customs you want to examine at first hand. But is it a propitious moment for you to be absent, yourself and Father Fox, from Dublin. On the other hand, wouldn't it be more advantageous to visit this establishment at a time when there are retreats in progress. Give some consideration to all that before making a final decision to make the trip.

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<sup>52</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, p. 151.

Now, I go on to the question of proposed construction work at Dublin. It seems that you are quite courageous in wanting to simultaneously undertake a house for the Fathers, a retreat house and a church for the public; especially when there are similar undertakings to be carried out and completed for two other establishments of your Province, Leeds and Liverpool. It would be better to limit ourselves to the most pressing one, of greatest advantage to us, that is, the house to serve as the community's living quarters. Then, if resources show up in abundance, nothing will stop us from beginning other construction. I do not have to remind you that these questions must be dealt with in Provincial Council and further, its deliberations must be approved by O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Father General.

In this regard, you are undoubtedly aware that Mr. Wardell is loudly complaining that you have given preference at Dublin to another architect and frankly, I recommend that you do not do so unless you have very serious reasons for it.

One word on the attitude to take regarding Mr. Suffield.<sup>53</sup> If you can give this good priest one of our Fathers and a lay Brother to live with him, it would be like one of our small communities where he can make part of his novitiate. If this is [not] possible O[ur] Superior General authorizes him to make the first year of his novitiate in his actual post; but on the condition that he would start it by coming to Sickling Hall for a few days of preparatory retreat, spent with the other novices. Then, as soon as possible, we would try to obtain permission from his Bishop to definitively leave the diocese, which would allow him to go and complete his novitiate in a regular manner in the house set aside for that purpose.

Regarding poor Brother Carrey, since you all consider that we cannot accept him back, and it is better for the Province to leave him in the world, where he has returned through his fault, however, so as not to leave him with obligations that he cannot fulfill, O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Father Superior has granted him a dispensation from his vows for the time that he still had to complete.

Please accept, etc.

C. Aubert, O.M.I. P[riest], Assistant, Secretary General

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<sup>53</sup> This abbé did not make vows in the Congregation.

**30 - [To local Superiors].<sup>54</sup>**

*Bishop de Mazenod will be in Paris till the end of March. He begs pardon for not replying to the letters received and requests prayers for himself.*

[Marseilles], January 18, 1858.

Reverend Father,

It is my duty to let you know that O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General has just gone to Paris, summoned for the legislative assembly in his role as senator,<sup>55</sup> from where he will probably not return until the last two weeks in March. So, if you have to write to him directly during these two months of absence, address your letters to Bon La Fontaine Hotel, Grenelle Street, Saint Germain.

Our beloved Father, as he was leaving, commissioned me to express to you the regret he felt in not replying to your recent letters, as he had planned to do, due to his numerous occupations.

When you inform your community, Reverend Father, of the news which is the special object of my letter, please recommend our venerable Father and Superior General in a special way to the prayer of all its members and tell them how disappointed he was not to be able to reply to the letters that several of them had written him, a disappointment which is easily understood when one knows his paternal heart and knows that, according to the expression in his last circular, he places such great value on the communications a father of the family has with his numerous sons and sees them as one of the most satisfying occupations of his life.

Please accept, etc.

C. Aubert, Prov[incial], O.M.I. Gen. Sec.

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<sup>54</sup> Orig.: AGR, Casimir Aubert file. Father Aubert signed only the copy which we have preserved, sent to Father Courtès at Aix. We have another similar letter of February 7, 1859, *Ibidem*.

<sup>55</sup> The Founder was named Senator in 1856. Every year, from 1857 to 1860, he will spend the first months of the year till Palm Sunday at Paris.

**31 - [To Father Robert-Marie Cooke, Provincial of England].<sup>56</sup>**

*He may come to France to see how a retreat house operates. It is opportune to name Father Lynch Superior of the Dublin community. Choice of an architect. The novices who are behind in their studies should pay tuition.*

Marseilles, January 20, 1858.

Very Reverend Dear Sir,

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your last letter to which I have to reply in the name of our most Rev<sup>d</sup> Superior General. 1<sup>st</sup>. If you think the best time to make your journey to visit the house of retreat alluded to, in little Brittany, is the end of this month, you may act accordingly and therefore start from England, when you shall have received this letter. I suppose you will have held your Provincial council in order to settle every thing either temporal or spiritual connected with the welfare of our Society in England.

2<sup>ly</sup>. One of the essential points to arrange is the selection of a superior for Dublin. As you believe it would be injurious to our Leeds and Sickling Hall houses to remove their present Superiors, let then Father Vince remain in the first, and Father Arnoux at the head of the second of these Communities. But the difficulty still is the same to find a proper Superior for our Dublin establishment. After having seriously considered the matter our most Rev<sup>d</sup> and beloved Father directs me to tell you that he would prefer F. Lynch to F. Fox in that office. The qualifications of the latter though unquestionable as far as piety and some cleverness are concerned, cannot compensate for the want of a solid instruction and true theological science, when Father Lynch is possessed of real and sufficient acquirements in that respect, and more over is not deficient in piety. We have seen him during his stay of three months at Montolivet, and it is but justice to say that his manner of acting and the whole of his conduct has been quite right and satisfactory. Therefore it is he whom you will appoint as superior in Dublin, making nevertheless that place your usual residence, in order to oversee the great interest of your society that is engaged there.

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<sup>56</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, p. 157. Original English.

3<sup>ly</sup>. Your reasons for having taken Pugin instead of Mr. Wardell as architect in Ireland being well grounded, you are free to act accordingly, but it would be well to have those reasons approved of, in your Provincial Council.

4<sup>ly</sup>. When postulants well qualified come to you unless they be able to read philosophy they cannot be received without paying their pension. The pecuniary means of the noviciate being limited, the number of such novices should be also confined in proportion to the allowance which is yearly granted for them.

Adieu Dear Father Cooke, I have touched the chief points that required an answer. Believe me for ever.

Yours sincerely in Xto,

C. Aubert, O.M.I. Secret[ary] Gen[eral].

**32 - [To Bishop J.E. Bruno Guigues of Bytown, Provincial of Canada].<sup>57</sup>**

*Debts at the house in Buffalo. Advantages for and the possibility of accepting the Major Seminary at Philadelphia. Contribution of the Province of Canada to the general treasury, in spite of the debts of the house at Montreal. Two Fathers will be sent for the foundation at Philadelphia and not for the Irish people's chapel at Quebec.*

[Marseilles], January 26, 1858.

Your Excellency and very dear Father,

The last letter that O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General wrote you personally, and that of Reverend Father Tempier which followed several days later, were limited exclusively to the entirely different question of the major loan which we had to make here in favor of the house at Buffalo. Thus, I feel the obligation of also addressing you a letter to deal with other important questions to which you are undoubtedly waiting a reply.

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<sup>57</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, pp. 156-158.

I will begin with that of the proposal of a foundation at Philadelphia. We have already indicated to you how great a pleasure it would cause here, if that plan could be realized. An establishment of this nature offers indisputable advantages in every respect. Besides the recognition our Congregation in America would receive in the eyes of the clergy, from a proper Major seminary, well founded and situated in a major city almost in the centre of the United States, there would be on the other hand a great advantage for the Province to have a community exclusively dedicated to serious studies, made up of men more obliged by their role itself to regular discipline, and an ordered life of interior piety. There are no difficulties to that point, everyone is in agreement. That is already something and even a lot, since there remains after that only to will it, but with a sincere and efficacious will, before which all obstacles will disappear, if they were not impossibilities. Now, what is all involved in the matter at hand? To find at least three men of which one, who is solid and capable of directing the seminary, and the others good and able to teach the regular courses of clerical studies. It is undoubtedly difficult, especially considering the lack of men who are able to direct a house in the first place, and the need everywhere to somewhat strengthen communities by increasing their personnel. However, after mature reflection on it, we have come up with the following proposal. From our professors in France, we can give you two, of whom one knows English which he spoke during his two-year stay in England. You must give one from Canada, for example Father Trudeau, who can be replaced from here by an Irish Father whom you can employ at Bytown. There remains then to choose the superior, and there is no other than Reverend Father Chevalier. But, you say, what will become of the house at Buffalo? Don't be afraid at all, it will not thereby be ruined. It is enough to place there a superior who well understands the administration of an ordinary house in the Congregation and who is able to direct missions in an English-speaking country. We have such a person in Father Olivier who had been in charge of the house at Brownsville since the death of Reverend Father Verdet. He did it with distinction both as regards the governing of his community and the outside ministry, being the only missionary for the Anglo-American population of that entire region of Texas. But to head off an objection, I must have you consider that this Father is not strong enough in theological learning to be placed at the head of a seminary. So you see that the matter can be arranged properly, with some sacrifices on both sides. The Congregation in France will place itself in a truly embarrassing state, however, it is ready

to bleed itself for the general good, from which your province will reap immediate benefits. It seems only right that you carry out what is demanded in terms of your cooperation which, in the end, amounts to changing two men, Fathers Chevalier and Trudeau, for two others who will be sent to replace them. The final decision of this important matter of Philadelphia is thus in your hands. So, consider whether you are agreeable to the proposed plan and pronounce on it. Then, let us know your decision, so that we can act accordingly.

Now I will go on to financial concerns. Reverend Father Fabre was supposed to write you about this and he will do so a little later on, if only to send you the guidelines for your accounts in relation to the general treasury. In the meanwhile, please take note of the manner in which Our Most Reverend Superior General determined how your contribution to the general coffers of the Congregation is to be made, which is briefly mentioned in his letter at the end of last November. First of all, it is certainly understood that Canada will pay the General Procurator the sum of "arrears" it had promised, as well as the annual contribution for 1857 in the amount of 100 francs for each Father belonging to that Province. As for the future, that is, beginning with 1858 until the new regulation, *usque ad revocationem*, you are granted the following concession: Seeing the destitute state in which the Montreal house finds itself due to the considerable debts contracted for the construction of the church and community dwelling place, it is dispensed from its annual contribution to the Congregation of 100 francs for each Father. The other houses of the Canadian Province will pay, precisely every six months, half of this contribution to the Provincial treasury, in the same manner as it is set down for every other Province. At the end of the year, the Provincial Treasurer, having received the amount representing the contribution of all the houses (except that of Montreal), will report it to the General Treasurer, so that O[ur] M[ost] R[everend] Superior General can decide on the use to be made of the sum thus gathered in. That is, either send it to France to the general treasury to which it is due or, if the needs of Montreal absolutely demand it, he may find it fitting to return it on loan for this once, as an exception for which the house must later on reimburse the general treasury. That is the arrangement that our beloved Father determined to be followed for the financial situation between your Province and the general treasury. Here you will note a very benevolent disposition on the part of O[ur] M[ost] R[everend] Superior General and his Council which is a unique exception in the

Congregation since even our foreign missions established in pagan lands are required to make the same contribution which is regularly paid on a yearly basis, without the general treasury giving up even a part of it for any reason whatever.

I forgot to tell you that the sacrifice of two members that France has made for the establishment at Philadelphia due to its importance, would not have been agreed to for any ordinary house elsewhere, such as in Quebec where it was a matter of taking on the service of the chapel for the Irish. On the other hand, it is evident that, in carrying out the foundation at Philadelphia, it is necessary to postpone the execution of the plan for Quebec. I have neither space nor time to give you any news. However, I must not close without telling you that O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General is at Paris where he will stay several weeks for the session of the Senate.

Farewell for this time, then. Always regard me, Your Excellency and very dear Father, as sincerely yours in Xto.

C. Aubert, O.M.I. Sec. Gen.

**33 - [To Bishop J.E. Bruno Guigues of Bytown, Provincial of Canada].<sup>58</sup>**

*Temporary exclaustation of Father A. Médard Bourassa. Bishop de Mazenod does not favor accepting a Major Seminary at Philadelphia.*

[Marseilles], February 2, 1858.

Your Excellency and very dear Father,

I am writing you again today, since I was in too much of a hurry when I was doing so last week. In a way, I am not sorry, since that has gained me the pleasure of conversing a few moments with you. But I regret the reason which obliges me to write you this letter, since the omission that I am going to correct may cause you some grief in regard to the reply you must have been expecting, regarding the matter of Father Bourassa. After this little preamble, which was necessary to explain why you have not yet received this reply, I will get started and give it to you.

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<sup>58</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, p. 158-159.



O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General, as well as his Council, considers that the reasons you give for the petition of the Father in question are not grave enough to make it necessary to take the steps you allude to in your letter, and still less that they would warrant a legitimate dispensation from vows and the oath of perseverance. However, since you all seem to agree in recognizing that there is no other way of keeping this man in the Congregation, under the ordinary conditions as other members that belong to it, and that it is necessary that he have a small taste of another way of life, that of the secular priest in the ordinary exercise of pastoral ministry, it is our opinion here that, instead of dispensing him entirely from vows and thus sever the ties which bind him to the Congregation, it would be better in the case of Father Bourassa to take a sort of *mezzo termine* which would reconcile the need he has for a change of state with the obligations of conscience relative to the agreement he contracted with the Congregation. This would mean granting him a temporary dispensation or rather a suspension of vows for the time he will spend as a secular priest in one of the posts of your diocese, which you will entrust to him, so that he can make the trial that you deem necessary and that you think should also be a sufficient test simultaneously to cure him and to call him back to the love of his religious vocation and fidelity to the duties it imposes. The matter is that much more feasible in that, since you are both his religious and ecclesiastical superior, the authority you hold over him as priest of your diocese can supply for his keeping the vow of religious obedience and, on the other hand, since he will still be employed in your diocese where several quasi-parish posts are served by our Fathers, he can continue to pass for a member of the Congregation in the eyes of the clergy and people. So, please try to work out this affair in the manner I have just pointed out to you.

Since I have the opportunity to write you so soon after my last letter, allow me to profit from it to come back on one of the questions treated at length therein. I wish to talk about the plan concerning a Major Seminary at Philadelphia. Since I presented things in such a way as to encourage you to accept this establishment, I am afraid that I allowed myself to be influenced by this disposition and did not properly weigh the pros and cons of this important question. I feel it is my duty to make this remark to you before you arrive at a definitive decision, so much the more since O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General wants us to take a second look at it. Here is the manner he wrote me about it

from Paris, after my last letter to Your Excellency which left in the mail last week: "As to the matter of Philadelphia, where you would consider sending the overflow from Brownsville, or rather where you would want to solve matters by means of men taken from there, this is an important matter. I wonder if we would be wise to get involved with a Bishop who, being a Redemptorist,<sup>59</sup> has not called on his own to direct this seminary, who undoubtedly could not get along with the Lazarists who were in charge, and who has not called on the Jesuits who furthermore have the talent for seizing the advantage.<sup>60</sup> It seems to me that we should make all these observations to the Bishop of Bytown who is closer than we and better able to decide, knowing the situation." I present you these observations just as O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General formulated them himself. Now I think I have restored a proper balance and did what I thought necessary to soothe my conscience. It is up to you to decide since O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General and his council leave it to your decision.

Today's letter had no other purpose than the two questions I have just dealt with, so I conclude by renewing my best regards, etc....

C. Aubert O.M.I. Sec. Gen.

### 34 - [To Father François Bermond in Oregon].<sup>61</sup>

*Advise in advance when he takes out money in the name of Father Aubert or the Congregation. Father Ricard counsels Father Bermond to wait for a long time before passing judgment on the state of the Oregon mission. Bishop Demers has asked for Oblates in Vancouver. The founder's good health.*

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<sup>59</sup> Bishop J. Népomucène Neumann, C.S.S.R. (+1860), canonized June 19, 1977.

<sup>60</sup> It seems that it was not due to Bishop de Mazenod's considerations that the Oblates did not accept the direction of the seminary at Philadelphia (cf. *intra*, letters of April 5). Bishop de Mazenod here made a bold judgment on Bishop Neumann who didn't offer his seminary to the Redemptorists whose Rule expressly excluded this work, nor to the Jesuits since he had already raised discontent among the clergy by entrusting them with a parish. Bishop de Mazenod also showed himself severe with the Jesuits who, in 1857, replaced the Oblates at the Major Seminary at Romans, in a fashion that he qualified as less than edifying.

<sup>61</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, pp. 160-161.

[Marseilles], February 8, 1858.

Reverend and very dear Father,

Several days ago your letter arrived, dated from San Francisco, later than it should have since the transaction of two thousand francs which you withdrew from me, without any advance notice, preceded it by eight days. Next time don't forget to mail your letter of notice before signing a bank note if you don't want to suffer some embarrassment or, at least, postdate it some time later, v.g. a month or two weeks, considering that this is the shortest time possible since we are corresponding at such a distance. I'm surprised that a man familiar with business transactions, such as you are, would not have made these reflections. After this preamble, which may appear to you as less suited to yourself than to me and that you will take in good spirits since you tend to like candor, I will get down to business.

To begin with, I must tell you that if I am writing you today, it is not because I have nothing precisely new to tell you. You have received sufficient instructions about the mission you are to carry out in Oregon. You will take them with you in the act signed by O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General which will serve as authentic proof of your legitimate delegation, found also in the letter of which O[ur] beloved Father wrote the first page. But, I thought that when you arrive at your actual destination, you would be happy to receive some news from Europe soon after and you would not be pleased having to wait for it, so that you would yourself have to announce your awaited arrival in the midst of our brothers in Oregon. That is the main reason for writing this letter. I think you will recognize it as a considerate sign of attention from your former teacher and director.

On my part, I am pleased to give you two considerations. The first was suggested by Reverend Father Ricard who, in acknowledging the letter I passed on to him from you at Lumières, wrote me these words which I copy for you verbatim:

"I am very grateful for Father Bermond's letter which you passed on to me. His opinion about the Oregon missions changes nothing on the facts themselves. I have never kept you in the dark about the difficulties we have to face in this country and one will still encounter, but which missions prosper so as to leave nothing further to be desired? Don't people consider worthless the triumph religion has experienced in

these last times? Besides, you know Mister Leclair. I don't know what Father Bermond will do or say when he arrives at Olympia. But, if he is prudent, he will wait for a while, even a rather long time, before passing judgment and, if I have advice to give, it would be not to fully trust first reports from new arrivals in whatever country it might be." These words need no commentary. Evidently, they mean that you must not proceed too quickly in the mission that you are to carry out in Oregon, which is a delicate and difficult work.

It is also well to let you know that Bishop Demers is very eager to have some of our Fathers for the Indian missions at Vancouver. He has once again had the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda in Rome write to us to renew the request he has already made several times to that end, both to ourselves and the Holy See. On the other hand, our Fathers in Oregon seem to believe that their missions offer the greatest chance of success in that whole vast country. So, it is up to you examine this so that, following your report, O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd F[athe]r Superior General can reply both to Rome and to Bishop Demers himself.

Before closing my letter, I can let you know that everyone here is fine and that O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd and beloved Father, with whom I shared your letters, continues to enjoy excellent health. There is nothing new as regards the state of material items and personnel in our houses of France. Everything there is continuing as usual.

Farewell, etc.

C. Aubert, Assistant, O.M.I. Secretary General.

### 35 - [To Bishop J.E. Bruno Guigues at Bytown].<sup>62</sup>

*Since Bishop Guigues cannot supply Fathers for the seminary at Philadelphia, we should renounce this project. He judges the Fathers sent him too severely. The situation of Father M. Bourassa. Debts of the Montreal house.*

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<sup>62</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, pp. 162-163.

[Marseilles], April 5, 1858.

Your Excellency and very dear Father,

Before replying to your last letter, I had to wait to let O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General see it. Since he didn't return from Paris until Holy Week, I could only communicate it to him during these days. Today I am writing to transmit the result to you. O[ur] beloved Father thinks that, since it is not possible for you to follow the plan using the necessary personnel we found for the projected establishment at Philadelphia, there is no other choice than to give up the idea. For, if you find it beyond your ability to simply change two men from your Province or, to put it better, to exchange these two men with two others whom we sufficiently guaranteed the aptitude for the duties they would have to fulfill, judge yourself if we can, with the resources we have in France, carry out that substitution and still furnish the two other necessary members. So, there is nothing more to do for this plan than purely and simply renounce it. This is the sense in which I am writing to Reverend Father Chevalier by the same mail, so that he no longer leaves the Bishop of Philadelphia with hopes that cannot be realized for three or four years. The American Prelate will then see what is best for him to do, and choose either to contact other religious or wait patiently until we are in a position to accept the burden of his seminary.

Here, I will not go into the depth of the question you bring up relative to the calibre of the men, which you accuse the superior administration of greatly exaggerating, when we sent them to you in Canada. It is possible that we somewhat overly presented the favorable side in the submission we made at that time, but allow me to frankly tell your Excellency that in Canada people judged them a little severely and as to you personally, your scarcely occupied yourself with anything except presenting the reverse side of the coin in what your last letter said in their regard. The disappointment you said you experienced with them is not realistic except for Father [Baudre] whom we could only judge by his conduct at Galveston, which was certainly not of the kind to give an unfavourable opinion of him. As for the other two, we were far from giving them to you as perfect men in the area of piety and knowledge. We simply told you that you would be able to derive benefit from each in the sphere of his capacity and aptitudes. You have enough experience in administration and knowledge of men to know that along with good qualities one can find quite the opposite in men. When all is said and done, the general level of the value of people is rarely above the

mediocre. In regard to Brother MacGrath, he wrote in a letter of direction to O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General, wherein he said, among other things, that he would desire to be left in the ranks of a simple Oblate without being raised to Holy Orders. Please tell him that we will reply to his letter a little later and, in the meantime, tell me what you think of this request and if it is based on solid and serious reasons.

What you told us about Father Bourassa only half reassured us in his regard. It would however be very remarkable that he would not wish to understand all the indulgence the Congregation has had in his regard in the decision we made in response to the request you made in his name. Let's hope that God will give him the grace to profit from the experience he is to undergo and that he will soon see that it is hardly for the good of his soul.

We will not go back on the decision taken by O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Father General regarding your Province's contribution which certainly no one can complain about, since the only Canadian house (that of Montreal) which needed an exemption obtained it. To help this house to somewhat overcome its financial embarrassment, I thought it would be wise to have recourse to the Society of the Propagation of the Faith. I talked to my brother about it and await his reply which I hope to receive before month's end, so that the request, if we are to make one, be included in the budget for our foreign missions which we present every year to the Council of the Society between April and May. I think I have replied to the main points of your letter which I have at hand, so I now have only to conclude my reply so that it leaves by this week's mail. Allow me, Your Excellency, before closing, to use your obliging mediation to give my regards to all our Fathers and Brothers.

Yours devotedly in Xto.

C. Aubert, O.M.I. p[rie]st.

### 36 - [To Father Edouard Chevalier at Buffalo].<sup>63</sup>

*We must inform Bishop Neumann of Philadelphia that we cannot accept the direction of his Major Seminary. Father Chevalier should thank Bishop de Mazenod for borrowing from his family's resources to save the Buffalo property from ruin.*

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<sup>63</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, pp. 163-164.

[Marseilles], April 5, 1858.

Reverend and very dear Father,

I am finally able to give you a definitive reply relative to the plan of accepting the direction of the Major Seminary at Philadelphia. I regret that it is contrary to your expectations and negative, but that is not your fault. With great difficulty we arrived at a combination of personnel to be in charge of this difficult work, which would have adequately responded to the needs of the situation, but it required that the Canadian Province, of which you are a member, agree to the exchange of two men needed for this arrangement. So, we wrote to your Provincial with the proposal, who replied that, in view of the present circumstances, it was impossible to make the substitution and if France alone was not able to furnish all the elements required for the foundation, we would have to give up the idea. In other words, in spite of the best will in the world, one cannot give what one doesn't have, and here we certainly do not have someone who speaks English well to direct that establishment. It follows that we had no other option than the one Bishop Guigues suggested to us.

Now, since you have served as intermediary in this negotiation between the Bishop of Philadelphia and the Congregation, O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General has named you to communicate this negative decision to the American Prelate. You may tell him that up to now we had hoped to undertake his Major Seminary since this year we were counting on having available the Superior absolutely necessary for that delicate enterprise, but that unforeseen events made it impossible to remove him from his present post before three years and we have no other man of that calibre to send to Philadelphia.

Consequently, we have very regretfully been forced to renounce this establishment, unless the Bishop agrees to postpone the completion of his plan in the aforementioned time. In no way at all do we wish to hamper the outcome of his choice which he is perfectly free to make in some other fashion. That is basically your official note to the Bishop of Philadelphia, which you will take care to send him immediately, and which will, I think, terminate this entire matter.

Before saying goodbye to you today, my dear Father, I cannot resist telling you that here we were very astonished that you didn't even write a line, especially to O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General, to thank

him for the exceptional act of charity he just performed for the house in which you are Superior, consenting to make a loan on his own possessions to save you from imminent ruin. It seems to me that the matter was important enough to be worth *taking note* of, to use an English expression, and writing a letter of thanks in that vein, addressed to our beloved Father, to whom your Province and especially your house at Buffalo have just incurred a debt of gratitude, the full extent of which there is room to believe they will comprehend.

In closing, I beg you to remember me to Reverend Father Naughten and all the other Fathers, as well as the Brothers who make up the personnel of your community.

Affectionately yours in Xto.

C. Aubert, O.M.I. p[rie]st, Assistant, Secretary General.

**37 - [To Father Augustin Gaudet, Superior at Brownsville].<sup>64</sup>**

*Father Aubert tries to reply to all letters. Plan of a foundation in Mexico. We are not accepting the seminary at Philadelphia. Allocation from the Propagation of the Faith for construction at Brownsville.*

[Marseilles], April 20, 1858.

Reverend and very dear Father,

I saw in a short letter that you addressed to Our Most Reverend Superior General, with a large folder for Rome from the Pastor of Matamoras, that you found the interval between letters in my correspondence to be a little long. However, it seems to me that I hardly ever leave your letters without a reply. So, if you want these letters to reach you more often, you only have to write me more often yourself, even though you shouldn't lose sight of the fact that it is hard for me to reply to all the letters of those who write to me. The reason is easy to comprehend, that is, those people have only one letter to write when they want to write me, whereas I must do so for as many as write to me, and I ask you to believe that they are not a small number, even counting only those from foreign missions.

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<sup>64</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, pp. 164-165.



After this possibly too-long preamble, to which you however forced me, I will now get down to business. First of all, where are we at in the question of our establishment in Mexico? We were rather surprised that you said nothing of it in your short letter to Our Most Reverend Superior General. Since that country now seems to have been restored to order, one can presume that the obstacle, which hindered the Bishop of Monterey<sup>65</sup> from communicating with you about your substitution for the Pastor of Matamoras in charge of that parish, will soon be overcome, if it hasn't already. It is with this idea in mind that we are leaving at Brownsville the personnel you have now, and who are certainly more numerous than are needed in that locality, while in other places they are crying out for apostolic workers everywhere. It was also to enable you to make the foundation in Mexico that we left with you young Father Lustrac, who would have liked to come and spend some time in France. We have only this reason to continue responding negatively to his request. For I cannot leave you unaware that we have renounced our plan to accept the Major Seminary at Philadelphia, at least for the present. The arrangement we had decided on to form the staff of Fathers for that establishment could not be finalized, so we had to put off the execution of that plan for an indefinite period of time and write to the Bishop to no longer count on us, unless he wanted to wait another several years. So, we can consider that matter as terminated. Now I have come to some questions, since your last letter said almost nothing. What is the state of your construction at Brownsville? Has there been progress on the new church? What has been done to date on the house that you were supposed to build for yourselves? I presume that you were able to obtain some resources on the spot to meet a part of the expenses entailed in all those works. On our part, we are trying to help you by the only means at our disposal, which is to obtain yearly assistance from the Propagation of the Faith. I think I have already informed you that the Council of that Society had granted you an allocation of 15,000 francs for this present distribution. But we can scarcely count on that sum before the end of the month, and certainly a lot of time will be needed before you can touch it, after we take the most expedient, as well as the most sure, manner of sending it, which is to accredit it to you through the financial house at New Orleans through which we have sent allocations to Texas in past years. I will do everything required for this purpose and will let you know as soon as I can do so.

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<sup>65</sup> Bishop Th. Amat of Monterey.

I have neither time nor space to tell you any news, so I limit myself to saying that everyone here is fine and especially our beloved Father who continues to enjoy perfect health.

Farewell, very dear Father Gaudet, please remember me to all our Fathers and Brothers.

I embrace you affectionately in *osculo sancto*.

C. Aubert, O.M.I. p[rie]st, Secret[ary] Gen[eral].

**38 - [To Father Louis d'Herbomez in Oregon].<sup>66</sup>**

*Deliberations of the General Council about the Oregon missions. It is opportune to abandon the missions to the Yakimas and Cayouses. Saint Joseph's at Olympia will remain the Vicariate's central mission. We will accept missions in Bishop Demers' diocese.*

[Marseilles], April 20, 1858.

Reverend and very dear Father,

As it is quite possible that Reverend Father Bermond will no longer be in Oregon when this letter arrives, I am sending it to you. It is a reply I am making in the name of O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General to the detailed report which that Father sent him as a result of his observations and activities during the canonical visit of your vicariate. As I wrote in my March letter, since our beloved Father was absent from Marseilles when the first message of Father Bermond arrived, we had to wait until his return before treating the matters of Oregon, which actually took place at the first Council meeting held after Easter. We have studied and discussed the letters of Father Visitor, as well as yours, and everything which dealt with the question and interests of our Congregation in your distant missions. I don't have to report to you everything that was said on this topic. It suffices to give you the conclusions we have reached, and they are:

1° The Council recognized that there are more than enough reasons not to take up again the missions to the Yakimas and Cayouses. Besides the fact that the reestablishment of those missions would present some

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<sup>66</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, pp. 166-168.

difficulties not easy to surmount, even if it would be possible to do so without too much difficulty, it is evident that neither prudence nor the good of religion would suggest doing so. If it were a matter of founding these missions under ordinary circumstances, it would still be something to consider and possibly there would be good reasons to decide in the negative. But as it is, there is nothing to consider. Conditions in that area of the Americas are so unstable that it is not worth starting a work there which should be lasting. With the ever-present prospect of a war starting again, nothing serious can be done. Besides, those missions furnish only a rather limited number of Indian people whereas there is, in the same area of America where you live, a vast field where no worker has yet appeared to gather the abundant harvest which could be brought in. Consequently, the matter is definitely closed and the decision irrevocable. Our Fathers will not take up again the missions to the Yakimas and Cayouses which necessity forced us to abandon.

2° Our Most Reverend Superior General has also decided in Council that the post of St. Joseph's at Olympia should be maintained. Its situation in a rather temperate zone and its proximity to other partly-civilized regions of Oregon militate in its favor and would be sufficient reason not to abandon it, since it is necessary that for the other distant missions, in other places where there are establishments of the Congregation, there should be a sort of centre to receive newcomers, where the missionaries could take refuge in certain eventualities, and that there be a proper, duly constituted house, where the Fathers might find all the spiritual and corporal help they need, and which would serve as a kind of resource centre for all the missions of that same vicariate and be a kind of meeting place between the two extremes, civilized and native life. Besides that, the consideration of the true good that the Olympia establishment has already accomplished in regard to religion among Indian people of the district and the considerable greater good it may still effect, at least for a good number of years, among those who live on or visit the coast of Puget Bay, merit being weighed on the side of our continuing to maintain this rather important post. So, it has been decided that St. Joseph's of Olympia remain what it has been up to now, that is, our central establishment in Oregon, and that it be, for the time being, the ordinary residence of the Superior in charge of the Vicariate.

3° But, since the Olympia mission and the one at the Bay, including the service to white people in the area, cannot supply enough work for the number of workers that we have in Oregon, we must try to find

work for some of them elsewhere and, therefore, to found another post. All of you seem to agree that New Caledonia offers the best prospect for flourishing Missions among Indians and other indisputable advantages. According to Father Bermond's letters, it would seem probable that you may have begun negotiations with Bishop Demers or come to some agreement with him, for he has jurisdiction over that region. If such is the case, there is nothing more to do than approve what has been done and, by this approval, to confirm the resolutions adopted by the Father Visitor as well as the consequent measures taken to implement them. If, on the contrary, that is, nothing has yet been decided with the Bishop of Vancouver, you are authorized to do so in the sense we spoke of, whereby this Prelate will confide this territory to us and give us full liberty to establish and develop Missions therein. The plan to erect an Apostolic Vicariate from this part of Oregon to be served exclusively by missionaries of our Society, one of whom would be the Vicar, would be a good and desirable thing. But for that to happen, Rome must be involved and the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda would have to agree to carry it out. Our Most Reverend Superior General is well disposed to make the proposal to it, and he is on good terms with the Cardinal Prefect so as to give hope that the request would be received favorably. But, as yet, we cannot count on it as definite. In any case, you know our beloved Father's intentions regarding that New Caledonian Mission, and that should suffice for you. I have also informed you about his decisions on the other questions concerning the position of our Fathers in Oregon, so now you know how to adjust plans and what line your conduct is to follow. In closing, please remember me to all our Fathers and Brothers with you. Farewell, sincerely your devoted brother in Xto.

C. Aubert, O.M.I. p[rie]st,  
Assist[ant], Secret[ary] Gen[eral].

### 39 - [To Bishop Casanelli d'Istria of Ajaccio].<sup>67</sup>

*Regret at not having met the Bishop during the last trip to Corsica. The clerical school at Vico has a five-year study program, with a sixth year for Philosophy. Discipline will suffer as long as there are day-scholars. It would be better to make up the financial deficit at Vico from the surplus at the Major Seminary.*

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<sup>67</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, pp. 190-191.

[Marseilles], July 8, 1858.

Your Excellency,

I don't want to wait any longer to write you about the visit I just made to Corsica. I would like to start by expressing sincere regret at not being able to set it at another time when I would have had the pleasure and honor of meeting Your Excellency in your episcopal city. The privation was that much more deeply felt in that I was not able to receive the warm welcome that you gave me in past years. I would have been very pleased to converse with Your Excellency about some questions relative to the clerical school at Vico in which I know that you are particularly interested. Not being able to do so face to face, I will try to make up for it in writing, offering you the results of my observations. I want to render justice to the efforts our Fathers have made in carrying out their duties well and I am pleased to observe a veritable improvement in everything about this work since last year, however, I must truly say that there is still very much to do to make the school what it should be, both in discipline and learning. In regard to the latter, it is essential that we adopt a plan which simultaneously responds to the special purpose we proposed in establishing this school and satisfies the intellectual demands of our times. So, we must succeed in reconciling the acquisition of good secondary instruction with the use of considerably less time than is devoted to it in colleges and minor seminaries. Five years for Latin and the humanities, with a sixth year for Philosophy, should suffice, since I do not include the elementary class they offer at Vico for the children who still don't know French. Strictly speaking, the school should accept only those who are prepared to begin Latin. It is with this in view that I wish to formulate a complete plan of studies to present to Your Excellency, but I would like to know your opinion about it before doing so. As for discipline which must likewise be raised to a higher level, this will be more difficult to achieve, since here the obstacles are not just people but the state of the locales which is not easy to change. As long as there isn't some means of gathering the pupils in the same place to exercise an active, continual surveillance over them, there will always be something lacking in the education given at Vico, which will make itself felt later, in an unfortunate manner. It is true that, with the house which was just built between Nesa and the monastery, they can discipline a little better the day scholars who live there. But the boarders, in spite of the inconvenience the Fathers have placed themselves in, and even of the sacrifice that Your Excellency made of your

apartments, will not be in a real condition for good supervision until there is a building set aside exclusively for the school, the one already begun opposite the monastery. I also have something more to say to Your Excellency about financial matters. I limit myself to repeating what I have already respectfully stated to you, that the assistance of 2000 francs which I called for in favor of the school at Vico, is absolutely necessary for it to function. You have been able to obtain it from the government this year, but it was not the same last year which left a deficit in the monastery's fund which I take the liberty of proposing that you cover little by little by allowing the Major Seminary to apply to this fine diocesan work the sum of five or six hundred francs that our Fathers at Ajaccio can set aside by cutting back on some expenses.

Please accept, Your Excellency, etc....

C. Aubert, Provincial.

#### 40 - [To Bishop Casanelli d'Istria of Ajaccio].<sup>68</sup>

*To improve studies and discipline at the clerical school of Vico, Father Mathieu Balaïn has been named Superior and Director. Other changes in personnel at Vico and at the Major Seminary.*

[Marseilles], September 16, 1858.

In the letter I was honored to send you following the visit I made to our houses in Corsica last June, I told you that there was still a lot to be done to place the clerical school at Vico in a satisfactory state as regards discipline and studies. The Congregation to which Your Excellency entrusted this work thus had to find means of introducing necessary improvements therein. It began by strengthening the teaching and supervisory personnel with men capable of fulfilling these duties well. But, so as not to leave matters half done, we had to introduce another modification, namely that the main person in charge of the school be also the house Superior. Reasons, which we have no need to specify here, prohibited us from entrusting this double duty to Reverend Father Brun and it would suit Reverend Father Luigi even less. Thus, we were forced to look for another person who, endowed with all necessary powers, could

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<sup>68</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, p. 199.

set the establishment at Vico on the foundation we desire. After considering many possibilities, we chose Reverend Father Balain, moral theology professor at your Major Seminary. You know this man, so I have no need to praise him. He is undoubtedly the one needed to carry out the important mission to be entrusted to him at Vico in a manner which we hope will be only temporary. We realize that it is a great sacrifice imposed on the Seminary at Ajaccio and even though it is in the interests of a diocesan work for which Your Excellency rightfully expects some success, we must consider, during the coming year, how we can restore him to teaching theology.

Besides this change that Reverend Father Balain's presence at Vico necessitates in the staff of directors and professors at your Major Seminary, there is, Your Excellency, another one of which I must give you advance notice, the replacement of Reverend Father Richard, for whom we will give you someone who, we trust, will be satisfactory to everyone. We also thought about withdrawing Father Chaine from Ajaccio, but since we learnt that Your Excellency would rather regret this Father's removal, and that you wish to make the least possible change in personnel at your seminary, we will not proceed with the idea. Now that I have come to this point, I must also inform you that it seems Reverend Father DeVeronico shouldn't continue his duties as bursar at Vico much longer; his presence poses some problems in that house. We presume you will not be opposed if we recall him to the continent, at least for a time.

I do not think, Your Excellency, that now is the time to reiterate the material interests of our community at Vico. You know that after the suspension of Government funding in 1857, our bursar's current account has run a deficit of well over a thousand francs. I leave it to your wisdom and generosity to find a remedy for this house.

Please accept, Your Excellency, etc....

C. Aubert O.M.I.

#### 41- [To Father Joseph Bise in Switzerland].<sup>69</sup>

*We are accepting to found a house at Montet in Switzerland. Conditions.*

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<sup>69</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, pp. 203-204.

[Marseilles], November [1858]

Reverend Father, O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General has asked me to reply to your last letter containing the proposed plan, along with two supporting letters, for an establishment in Switzerland.

In spite of the shortage of members in which you know we find ourselves, due to the needs that we are facing everywhere, in spite of the weak basis that a foundation presents in concrete circumstances of a region where people walk only on a powder-keg, the Council concluded by accepting your opinion. It is then a matter of starting very slowly, first of all, with only yourself, in the simple manner you indicated, agreed to by the Pastor of Montet and likewise approved by the diocesan Bishop.<sup>70</sup> You would take possession of the parish whose income will be allocated to the upkeep of the fledgling community, then we would try to gather a small fund to help in covering all expenses, and meet the needs of the community once it is formed. You cannot count on having the two companions you asked for before the end of the winter campaign, that is Easter, due to the mission and jubilee works in which all our laborers are engaged. However, if we can send them to you during the Easter season so they can still render some assistance to the pastors of neighboring parishes, you can rest assured that we will do so, but we aren't making a commitment to this. That sums up what I was supposed to tell you. I presume that this reply will conform to your wishes and that it will be approved by the interested parties when you have communicated it to them. Consequently, here we will consider the matter as good as finalized, so you can act according to these instructions and when you have decided on something, please write again to O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General who wants you to keep him abreast of everything. Farewell, very dear Father Bise. Rest assured that I forever remain your very devoted brother in Xto and MI.

Aubert, O.M.I. p[rie]st.

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<sup>70</sup> Bishop Pierre Joseph Preux, then Bishop of Sion.



**42 - [To Bishop J. Gillis, Vicar Apostolic of Edinburgh].<sup>71</sup>**

*The Oblates will leave Galashiels due to lack of resources and work.*

[Marseilles], December 28, 1958.

Your Excellency,

Considering the state of affairs of our Congregation in Scotland, it is at least a duty of propriety that our Major Superiors directly intervene in it and communicate with Your Excellency. So, it is in the name of O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General's Council that I discuss this matter with you for a few moments. Reverend Father Noble has kept us completely up to date on everything that has recently happened between Your Excellency and himself, as well as on the conversations he has had with Mister Hope Scott. The report he gave us, which we considered accurate, led us to conclude first that Galashiels is no longer a suitable place for our Congregation. Seeing the considerable reduction in revenue that will take place from now on in that mission, a missionary community, will it still find something to live on, will it have enough work since missions and retreats will naturally be entrusted to the religious who are going to settle in Edinburgh itself, in the centre of all the country's activities. Secondly, there follows from the matter that Father Noble has explained to us, that we must likewise give up the only place which would have been suitable as an exchange for Galashiels, I mean the church and rectory at Leith. Actually, that property is deeply in debt, up to 5000 pounds, and cannot be accepted in such conditions by our Congregation. We have already had to make so many financial sacrifices for most of our other establishments in England and this Province of the Congregation is still so heavily burdened that it would be truly rash for it to take on the responsibility of new debts. Neither does the Edinburgh diocese seem to be able to make any financial sacrifices on our behalf. It is easy to understand for anyone who, even in a small way, knows the situation of Catholic life in this country. Besides, even if it were under better temporal conditions, it would naturally be less inclined to impose such sacrifices now that it will possess a more renowned society whose members will serve both clergy and people. Such being the case, Your Excellency will certainly understand that there is only one choice we

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<sup>71</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, pp. 213-214.

have to make, to withdraw, even though it will be painful for us to leave a country where we have tried to do some good and where we would have hoped to do even more according as time had allowed us to increase our number of evangelical workers. If our missionaries are abandoning this portion of the Father's field, it is not their fault. Neither is it yours, for I wish to praise Your Excellency for having always shown yourself bountiful to our Fathers in Scotland and it did not depend on you to place them on a more solid and respectable basis. It was the force of circumstances: each of us must know how to accept our situation.

Before closing, I must tell Your Excellency that we want to show ourselves to the very end what we have always been, inspired by the best of intentions, we have decided that in order to make it easier for you to replace the Oblates of Mary in their service at Galashiels, the two Fathers who are there now will not be withdrawn until after Easter, towards the middle of May. Father Noble will arrange this matter with you and Mister Hope.

Please accept, etc....

C. Aubert, Assistant, O.M.I. Secretary General.

#### 43 - [To Father H. Courtès at Aix].<sup>72</sup>

*Bishop de Mazenod is at Paris and will stay there about two months. He begs pardon for not replying to the last letters he received. Father De Veronico's trip to see his family. The preaching campaign for Lent. Unexpected return of Father Bermond from Oregon, etc.*

Marseilles, February 7, 1859.

Reverend Father,

When O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General left for Paris to attend the opening session of the legislature in his role as Senator, he asked me to express to you and all the Fathers of your house who recently wrote him, all the regret he felt at not being able to answer your letters. I should also let you know that if you or any member of your

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<sup>72</sup> Orig.: AGR, Casimir Aubert file. The letter begins with a circular sent to local superiors.

community wishes to write to our beloved Father during his stay in Paris, which will be about two months, you can, as last year, write to him at the Hotel Bon La Fontaine, Grenelle Street, St. Germain.

Please accept, Reverend Father, the assurance of the sincere affection with which I remain your very devoted brother in Christo.

C. Aubert, O.M.I. p[rie]st,  
Assistant, Secret[ary] Gen[eral].

P.S. I am adding a few lines to this short official circular letter. It is, first of all, to let you know that we could choose the last two weeks in February to allow Father De Veronico to make the trip that we discussed and promised him a long time ago. He would leave Aix next Thursday afternoon, so he could take advantage of attending the ceremony of renewal of vows in the morning and would arrive here in the evening of the same day. The next day, Friday, he would leave Marseilles to head for his home country<sup>73</sup> on the coach for Nice. After spending ten or twelve days at home he would return a little before the end of the month and recommence his usual work at Aix just before Lent. It seems that is the arrangement which best satisfies all parties, since if there is a time when the above-mentioned Father can be away from Aix, it is especially when all the Fathers of the house are home, which offers all sorts of ways to replace him in services in his care. I forgot to tell you that the cost of this trip, which will come to about a hundred francs including everything, will be paid, half by the house of Aix where he is usefully employed and the other half by the Provincial fund, 50 francs each.

I hope that you will be kind enough to write me a few lines when Father De Veronico comes. I would want you to indicate, if possible, your campaign plan for Lent and the Easter Season so that here we can coordinate all our Provincial arrangements according to the plan you have adopted.

There is nothing new in the administration sphere which should be pointed out to you except the unexpected arrival of Father Bermond who came back from Oregon, believing that he has adequately fulfilled

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<sup>73</sup> Jean Joseph De Veronico, born at San Remo, Italy.

the mission for which he was sent into that far-off region.<sup>74</sup> We have received good news from Our Most Reverend Superior General who enjoys perfect health.

The enclosed letter for Father de Saboulin is a reply regarding a postulant who is studying at Lumières. Kindly give it to this Father as soon as possible.

Farewell, dear Father Courtès, my greetings to all.

I affectionately greet you *in osculo sancto*.

C. Aubert, O.M.I. p[rie]st.

**44 - Rev[eren]d Father [Charles] Bellon O.M.I., Talence house, Bordeaux.<sup>75</sup>**

*It isn't certain that the Oblates have permission to found a house in Paris. Father Aubert's cold which prohibited him from visiting the Soeurs de l'Espérance at Marseilles.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Marseilles, March 3, 1859.

Reverend and very dear Father,

Thanks for your consideration in letting me know so soon the good news about the definitive arrangement of the matter of our foundation at Paris. I certainly hope that the Cardinal Archbishop,<sup>76</sup> whose already-negative attitude was strongly turned against us by his Council's influence, does not revoke his consent to the request presented by the Superior of the Soeurs de l'Espérance at Paris. However, a sentence from O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General, in a letter he wrote after yours, leaves us in some doubt about it. I think it would be wise for us to continue praying for complete success, if it is to result in the glory of God and the good of souls.

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<sup>74</sup> The Founder was very displeased with this return which he termed: "an inexcusable extravagance, "shocking," "an unpardonable fault," etc. cf. *Oblate Writings* 12, pp. 124, 128, 162.

<sup>75</sup> Orig.: AGR, Casimir Aubert file.

<sup>76</sup> Archbishop François N.M. Morlot of Paris.

The good Soeurs de l'Espérance at Marseilles certainly have some reason to complain about us. Recent circumstances were such that, if I failed to visit them as they were expecting, it wasn't my fault. Since I was not yet able to go as far as Saint Michael's plain due to a bad cold which I couldn't shake, I sent Father Roulet, whom they know well, to take them a copy of the life of Bro[ther] Camper and give them an explanation. For his part, Reverend Father Vincens found a pretext to offer them his services, without making it seem obvious.

Concerning the matter of our leaving Scotland, it is true we are leaving Galashiels, but haven't fully decided to absolutely leave the country. Considering the outcries of Bishop Gillis, it is, on the contrary, probable that we will stay at Leith.

Farewell. very dear Father Bellon. Our two Fathers who are going to Bordeaux next week will give you orally other news that may interest you.

I greet you affectionately in Christo,

C. Aubert O.M.I., p[rie]st.

#### 45 - [To Archbishop J.M.M. Debelay of Avignon].<sup>77</sup>

*Complaints against the Pastor of Orange who, after asking Father Pierre J.A. Nicolas to preach lenten sermons in his parish, refused his coming at the last minute.*

[Marseilles], March 26, 1859.

[Your Excellency],

Today, I take the liberty to address Your Grace to complain about the unusual conduct of the Pastor of Orange towards Reverend Father Nicolas, of your diocese and a member of our community at Lumières.

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<sup>77</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, pp. 219-221. In the margin on page 219 of the register, Bishop de Mazenod himself wrote: "I greatly regret that Father Provincial had the unfortunate idea of sending that letter to the Archbishop of Avignon. I disagree with the substance and the form." Probably, the Founder glued the reply of Mister Martin, Vicar General of Avignon, in the name of the Archbishop, on the same page of the register. Mister Martin begs pardon and asks it for the Pastor of Orange and proposes to accept Father Nicolas or another Father during next Lent, and then to forget everything: "Sacrifices made for the sake of peace never cost too much," he concluded.

Last summer, this Father received a verbal invitation from the Pastor himself to preach lenten sermons this year in his parish (Notre Dame de Nazareth). Since our Rules demand the permission of the Provincial to accept that type of preaching, Reverend Father Nicolas wrote to ask me about it, hinting, nevertheless, at some fear that someone suggested to him that he would not be a great success since he is a native of that area. Since I knew this Father's ability very well and was convinced that he was quite capable of worthily fulfilling his ministry in any city whatsoever, I replied that he should not hesitate in face of the fear he had expressed to me but should continue with the conditional acceptance he had first given. Later, Reverend Father Nicolas, when he happened to be passing through Orange, met the Pastor again and who, for I know not what reason, didn't seem to be expecting this dear Father, and expressed some doubts about his success, basing himself on the maxim *Nemo propheta in patria sua*. Nothing was changed in the first arrangement, that is, it was decided that it would certainly be Father Nicolas who would preach the Lenten sermons in the parish of Notre Dame de Nazareth. None of us had the least inkling, the least suspicion that Mister Polette would change his mind after such a formal agreement. After that, the Father, planning on preaching the Lenten sermons for him, studiously went about the proximate preparation he had to make in order to suitably carry out this commitment. Finally, when Ash Wednesday arrived, as Father Nicolas was making his final preparation and was getting ready to leave to go to Avignon and from there to Orange, the Superior of Notre Dame de Lumières received from Mister Polette the strange letter you will find enclosed, in which, without giving any reason, this gentleman announced that he did not want this Father who was supposed to preach the Lenten sermons in his parish and that Providence had provided him with another preacher!

Your Excellency will understand the surprise and even indignation of the Superior when he read such a letter. One can hardly be surprised that, under that first impression, he expressed himself rather strongly in his reply to the Pastor of Orange. The latter replied on his part, trying to justify his conduct and to offer a sort of reparation for his errors, that through his fault he brought down on our Congregation on that occasion. I thought I should also send you the original of this 2nd letter of March 10th so that your Grace could better judge Mister Polette's strange manner of acting, seeing the pitiful arguments to which he had to have recourse. Since I have just explained to you the facts as they

happened, I don't think it necessary for me to insist here on drawing the conclusions. I must leave it to Your Grace, as Head Pastor and Chief Administrator of ecclesiastical administration, to judge a priest, placed at the head of one of the principal parishes of your diocese, capable of acting as Mister Polette has done toward a religious of the region, one belonging to an honorable family and a member of a missionary community which, with your approval, is dedicated to the service of your clergy and people, a first-class Pastor, who personally wrote and signed the two letters I am passing on to you.

I must also leave to your Grace's assessment what has been offensive and unpleasant for our Congregation of Oblates of Mary, and especially for the Father in particular, who is the victim of this sad affair in its disloyal scheme and ungracious conduct. That is what I felt I had to place before your judgment seat both for the honor of the Avignon diocese, to which are are not indifferent, and for that of the religious Congregation whose interests in all of southern France have been entrusted to me. Your well-known impartiality and sincere love of justice will not allow the cause of the weak and innocent to be sacrificed to the whims of unfounded opposition and the fears of a false and prejudiced spirit. Your deep wisdom will, on the other hand, know how to simultaneously reconcile the rights of the person who justly complains of being offended with the respect due to the one who gave offense, considering his sacred character and high position.

Nevertheless, your Grace will permit me to add, in concluding, that while accepting the kind of reparation proposed by the Pastor of Orange in his 2nd letter, I cannot consider that as sufficient, unless Mister Polette offers the charge of his parish for next Lent, not only to a member of the Congregation of Oblates of Mary, but once again personally to Reverend Father Nicolas, since it was especially on him that fell the offense to be repaired. I presume that no one will have the courage to object again with the unrealistic fear of opposition to this Father's preaching in his own territory, since I have it from reliable sources that people were generally well disposed to listen to him. As for his preaching ability, I am more aware of it than anyone, and besides, the Lenten series he preached last year in one of the principal churches of Nimes, with more than ordinary success, sufficiently proves that we can, without any hesitation, entrust him with a similar ministry in one of the cities on the other side of the Rhone, which belongs to a department bordering on that of Gard.

I conclude this already-too-long letter, begging Your Grace to forgive me the pain which it may have caused you by the disagreeable nature of the matter that I had to present to you. I hope that you will excuse me, recognizing that I was only doing a duty of my office, and giving you a sign of the full and complete confidence Your Grace has inspired in me during the personal contacts I have fortunately had with you at the community of Notre Dame de Lumières which is situated within the confines of my Province.

Please accept, Your Grace, the sentiments of profound respect, etc.,

C. Aubert, O.M.I. p[rie]st,  
Provincial, Secretary G[ene]ral.

**46 - Rev[eren]d Father Soulier O.M.I., stopping at Talence, near Bordeaux.<sup>78</sup>**

*After his two retreats to the Sisters of the Holy Family, Father Louis Soullier is invited to pass through Marseilles.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Marseilles, May 16, 1859.

Reverend Father,

As he was leaving for pastoral visits in the diocese, Our Most Reverend Superior General asked me to acknowledge the letter you just wrote him in which you informed him that you were going to Bordeaux to preach two retreats to the daughters of the Abbé Noailles. He wants me to tell you that not only can you, but even more, that you ought to, on your way back, put in an appearance at Marseilles where our beloved Father wishes to see you for several reasons. I don't have to add that, if the reason of giving pleasure to all of us who know you here can have some weight, where Our Most Reverend Superior alone suffices to turn the scale in his favor, I am assured that any contrary argument would be completely neutralized. This means that you will be received here with all the affection that reigns among the members of the same family.

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<sup>78</sup> Orig.: AGR: Casimir Aubert file.



Farewell, or rather, till we meet again. Meanwhile, I remain always your devoted brother in Christo et M[ari]a Im[maculata].

C. Aubert, O.M.I. p[rie]st,  
Secret[ary] Gen[eral]

**47 - Mister [Léon] Fouquet, Missionary Oblate of Mary, at Madame Tresvaux at Laval, Mayenne.<sup>79</sup>**

*He should be ready to leave for England in ten days. There he will meet his traveling companions for America. News of Bishop de Mazenod, Fathers V.T. Végreville and R.H. Olivier.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Marseilles, July 26, 1859.

Reverend and dear Father,

I am replying to your letter by return mail, since you are in such a hurry to know what you must do about your departure from the country.<sup>80</sup>

Yesterday, Reverend Father Tempier showed me the letter you wrote him and, what seemed to us as the best choice to make was that you should spend another eight or ten days in France. Thus, instead of going to Paris at the beginning of August, you can go there only towards the ninth or tenth, so that you can leave for England on the 11th or 12th and reach one of our houses in time to celebrate the feast of the Assumption with our Fathers. At Paris, you will go to our Fathers, on Boulevard Street, no. 33 in the Batignoles. You will there find a short letter from me which will outline your route for the remainder of the trip. Please reply as soon as possible to let me know if you have enough money for the rest of your voyage, since, if not, I will send you some with my letter to our Fathers at Paris. Your traveling companions will leave at the end of the week and will arrive in England seven or eight days from now. I will take that opportunity to carry out your errands. Nothing new in our area. Everyone is quite well. Our M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior Gen[eral] is visiting and should already be at Autun.

<sup>79</sup> Orig.: Ottawa, Deschâtelets Archives, HPK 5263, F77Z 4.

<sup>80</sup> Father Fouquet has his obedience for Saint Joseph's mission at Esquimault, British Columbia.

Father Végreville remains in the native missions of North America, in Saint Boniface diocese. Not long ago he wrote to O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superor Gen[eral]. He was well and seemed fully disposed to continue his zealous work and apostolic charity.

As for Father Olivier, he also remains in his Texas mission, living regularly at Brownsville where he is doing a lot of good work. There has never been any question of this Father returning to Europe. What someone has told you about him is thus pure fabrication and a fairy tale.

Farewell, dear Father Fouquet. We will try to find room at Le Calvaire for the professor you recommended, if he shows up. Farewell again, pray for me and [consider me] always your devoted bro[ther].

C. Aubert, O.M.I.

#### 48 - [To Father Léon Fouquet at Paris].<sup>81</sup>

*Abbé Chartier, a postulant. Mass intentions for Father Jerome Pont. Books for Oregon. Route he should follow from Paris to Leeds.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Marseilles, August 5, 1859.

Reverend Father,

Several days ago, I received your short letter with the one from the Abbé Chartier that you wished to send me, undoubtedly to give me a better picture of this good priest. Now I am waiting for the letter he is to send me directly according to your recommendation. I will respond in accordance, that is, he can leave as soon as he wishes, with the assurance that he will be well received at the novitiate, to where he is to go. In the meanwhile, I will have the time to ask O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General about the place he prefers him to go for that, Osier or Nancy. The latter is closer, but Osier offers some advantages which I would prefer for several reasons, especially for the spiritual well-being of this person.

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<sup>81</sup> Orig.: Ottawa, Deschâtelets Archives, HPK 5263, F77Z 5.

I will pass on to Reverend Father Pont, at the first chance I get, the money for the Mass intentions you obtained for him. Only, please let me know in your next letter the correct number we are to accept, if it is 219 as indicated on the short note attached, or 259 as the post scriptum notes in the margin of your letter.

As for the books for Oregon, we have made a box which contains almost all those mentioned on Father Bermond's list, except the History of the Church by Rohrbacher which we couldn't find, since the second edition is out of print, and the third is still in only the 7th or 8th volume. I think that, such being the case, you could leave it go for another occasion. To make up for it, I put in that box the 4 volumes of History by the Abbé Darras. On your part, you would do well to buy in England another history of the Church in 4 or 5 volumes, translated into English from the German of the Abbé Dollinger, a rather renowned author.

You would also do well to add the conferences of Wiseman in English, and several other very useful works in that language, of which our Fathers can give you the names.

Reverend Father Magnan will tell you that they placed Ferraris' library in a trunk they made up in Paris. That will be one less expense and headache for you. I imagine you have enough money to get to your destination in England, about 120 to 130 francs, otherwise, you can borrow some from our Fathers in Paris. The easiest route for you is to go directly from Paris to London by way of Dieppe (2nd Class). You get the tickets at the train station in Rouen. Once you are in London, have a cab drive you to Ford's hotel, on Manchester Street in Manchester Square. The hotel manager is a Catholic and they speak French there. After a day and a half or two of rest at London, you leave, getting your railway ticket for second class to Leeds, where you can take a cab and have them drive you to our Fathers at St. Mary's Catholic Chapel, Richmond Hill. You can stay there two or three days and then go to the novitiate which will be your home base in England till you leave for Oregon.

Farewell, dear Father. Always take me for your devoted brother in Christo.

C. Aubert O.M.I. p[rie]st.

**49 - [To Bishop Casanelli d'Istria of Ajaccio].<sup>82</sup>**

*The Oblates will not be able to maintain the clerical school at Vico if the students have to study philosophy at the Minor Seminary in Ajaccio. Father Mathieu Balaïn must leave Vico for health reasons. We will soon send another Superior for Vico and a moral theology professor for the Major Seminary at Ajaccio.*

[Marseilles], September 10, 1859.

Your Excellency,

Since I had the good fortune and pleasure of speaking with Your Excellency during my last trip to Corsica, I have seriously reflected on the proposal you communicated to me relative to the philosophy course for the students of the school at Vico. I have obtained all the necessary information and, directly or indirectly, consulted our Fathers, both at the house of Vico and at Ajaccio. Now it is time to let you know the results of my personal reflections as well as of the advice gained from others. We are all in agreement that the ruling which obliges the students of Vico to study philosophy at the Minor Seminary at Ajaccio would be a disaster for the former establishment. The people who thought up this plan certainly did not take into account the essential conditions which determined the formation of the school at Vico whose upkeep is absolutely necessary for its existence, conditions which consist in this, that the students we want to attract to clerical life be encouraged to go there with the view to a preparatory course of studies for the Major Seminary which, while good and solid, would be shorter and less expensive than those of University colleges and Minor Seminaries, which have now become true colleges. Your Excellency yourself proposed these conditions as a basis for the school at Vico. You have rightly thought that the courses of Latin and literature, which the Jesuits, who are competent judges in this regard, have considered for three centuries and more to be able to have their students complete in five years in countries where they are free to apply their classical method of teaching, could likewise be followed at Vico with sufficient success, by devoting six entire years to them. But if, when the pupils of this school graduate from their establishment, instead of going directly to the Major

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<sup>82</sup> Copy, APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, pp. 234-236.

Seminary, they are obliged to go elsewhere for another year of studies, whatever they may be (especially Philosophy), we undermine and reverse the entire edifice built up at Vico with such great care, especially if this measure becomes obligatory. Such a move evidently states that we have no confidence in the system of education followed in this school; it openly proclaims that the studies undergone there as a preparation for the Major Seminary are insufficient. Your Excellency will object that the Philosophy is only accidentally taught in the school at Vico, since in the first plan of study they had to do only the Latin course. Besides, others will object that it is the order of things that there be only one active educational establishment and this, preferably, to be the Minor Seminary which is the main clerical establishment for secondary studies in the diocese. Well, I don't want to appear obstinate in defending my thesis and I do admit there is some truth in those objections. So I propose to share the difference by adopting a middle way. That the Philosophy course be no longer offered at Vico, agreed; but it is not necessary to force the pupils from there to study it in the Minor Seminary. Let them be allowed to learn this material in the Major Seminary, where they will study it according to a rather different plan and method, in some relation to Theology, which would not be the university plan and method prescribed for the Bachelor's degree. I realize I'm spending too much time on this question, so will sum up by telling you that we are convinced that the proposed measure would ruin the school at Vico and can't agree that it be put into effect. If, however, Your Excellency would want to continue with it, we would consider ourselves, to our great regret, obliged to request that you allow us to close the school at Vico entirely. I hope that we will not be reduced to this extreme choice. As proof that this hope is well-founded among us, we have, in spite of some serious difficulties, just formed the entire staff of teachers who will be offering the courses during the school year which will open in about a month. The first of these difficulties is the replacement of the Superior, since, following medical advice, we have been obliged to withdraw Reverend Father Balaïn. Is it the air of that region which goes against him or is it something else that is harming his health? The fact is that he is more overcome by fatigue every year. In conscience we cannot take the chance of having him fall into a state which would have no remedy. Reverend Father Balaïn's recall to the continent is a loss for your diocese, of which you are very aware, I know. But I also know that Your Excellency will resign yourself to it with less difficulty, if you consider the misfortune which could happen to us in regard to this Father if we

left him in an area where he is ruining his health. On the other hand, this loss will not be that great for the house of Vico seeing that we do have a mature and experienced Father to place there as Superior, who besides has proven himself in secondary education, since he was at the head of a similar establishment for several years.<sup>83</sup> He has already received his obedience to come to Marseilles and, a few days after he arrives, he will leave again to take up his new position, with several members destined to complete the teaching staff in the school at Vico. As they pass through Ajaccio, they will all be pleased to meet Your Excellency and receive your blessing. It goes without saying that we will also send you a special professor assigned to teach moral theology in your Major Seminary, since evidently you need one more director and the Superior would be unable to continue for another year to teach this important class which requires a man full-time. Your Excellency can see that we always want to show ourselves worthy of the trust you have placed in our Congregation, to try to cooperate with your wisdom, and to support your ardent, as well as enlightened zeal in the first formation or more advanced stages of the young men who will someday form the clergy of your diocese.

Please accept once again, Your Excellency, this sign of my profound respect and sincere devotion.

Your most humble and obedient servant.

C. Aubert O.M.I., p[rie]st, Provincial.

**50 - Reverend Fouquet O.M.I., Lys Marie house, Sicklinghall, Wetherby, Yorkshire, [England].<sup>84</sup>**

*Route for his trip from England to Oregon by way of New York. News.*

Marseilles, September 23, 1859.

Reverend Father,

It is finally time for me to fulfill my promise, made already several times through others, to write you regarding your trip. Since you are approaching the end of your stay in England, we must think of a way to

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<sup>83</sup> Father Antoine Mouchette replaced Father Balain.

<sup>84</sup> Orig.: Ottawa, Deschâtelets Archives, HPK 5263. F77Z 5.

get you first to the United States. You are undoubtedly aware that the steamers leave from New York carrying passengers for California, from where you will continue to Oregon. You have to go from Liverpool to New York on one of the steamship lines between these two cities, but since it is not wise to spend a long time in New York, you would have to know the monthly schedule of the steamship departures from New York to Panama so as to set the date of your departure from Liverpool during October.

Our Fathers of the latter city could, it seems to me, obtain this information and transmit it to you as soon as possible, so that from there we can arrange the other departures whether from New York or San Francisco. As soon as you find out, let me know so that I can then notify you of all the directions F[athe]r Bermond gave for the trip from New York to the final destination, which will be Vancouver Island. I will also be sure to send you money for the cost of that trip and the crossing from Liverpool to New York, and to write you the list of books and other materials in the three trunks placed on the Company's sailboat from London, which left for Oregon last month.

Those are the main things I have to communicate to you now, my dear friend. I presume that Father Grandidier has made all the same preparations you have. You will be the only two for this trip, since the Lay Brother whom we wanted to send along with you did not turn out to have the requirements needed. The young priest you spoke about, Mister Chartier, has finally written to me, and he is going to novitiate in a few days.

I presume you are [up to date] on news from Marseilles [through our young] Irish Oblates and Reverend Father Bennett, [who are there] for more than a week now. [Your teaching position] in dogma is still vacant [and up to] now, your successor has still not been named. Farewell, dear Father Fouquet, my best regards to all our Fathers and brothers at Lys Marie.

Yours affectionately in Christo,

C. Aubert, O.M.I., P[rie]st.

P.S. Father Guillard should have arrived at his present posting. I presume he knows that he has been named for America. He is to go when Father Chevalier comes back next October 12th.

**51 - [To Bishop A.J.H. Jordany of Fréjus].<sup>85</sup>**

*Father Mathieu Balaïn will be the new Superior of the Major Seminary in Fréjus. His qualities. Desire that the Oblate community always merits the Prelate's confidence.*

[Marseilles], September 25, 1859.

Your Excellency,

Since Reverend Father Balaïn, the new Superior of your Major Seminary is ready to leave for his posting, it is my duty to inform you of his arrival at Fréjus soon and tell you something about the person you will meet. We well understood, by changing the Superior of the Major Seminary in agreement with Your Excellency, that it be for the better, which we can affirm relative to the choice of the person who will be placed at the head of that important institution. He is a serious man, entirely devoted to duty, a good religious and perfect cleric, with an intelligent and cultivated mind who, since the first year of his priesthood, has always taught theology, except for this year during which he has been in charge as Superior of a secondary school entrusted to our Fathers in Corsica by the Bishop of Ajaccio. To tell you everything in a word, I would easily compare him to Bishop Proal whom he seems to resemble, and whose excellent qualities he should reproduce, as Superior of the seminary, with this shade of difference however, that he is less severe and has a more pliable character than that venerable priest. His only weakness, if one could call it such, is that he is still a little young for the position that he is to occupy, since, if I read his baptism certificate correctly, I see it dated 1825, which means our dear Father Balaïn is scarcely thirty-five years old, however I think that will suffice.

I don't think that I have anything else to tell Your Excellency about our other Fathers who make up the staff of Directors and Professors of your seminary. In one of your last letters, Your Excellency expressed your general satisfaction with the staff. I have every hope that these good Fathers, faithful to the spirit of our Congregation, will continually strive more and more to merit the confidence of that worthy Prelate who

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<sup>85</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, pp. 236-237.



trusts them with the formation of his your clergy. The new superior's presence will be another reason, along with so many others, to fire their zeal and maintain their good will.

Please accept, Your Excellency, etc.

C. Aubert O.M.I., P[rie]st, Provincial.

**52 - Reverend Father Fouquet O.M.I., Lys Marie, Sicklinghall  
Yorkshire, Wetherby, [England].<sup>86</sup>**

*Money and advice for the trip to Oregon.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Marseilles, October 8, 1859.

Reverend Father,

I was waiting for the money for your trip before replying to your last letter. I just received it from Reverend Father Fabre, and hasten to send it to Father Pinet who is used to exchanging these kinds of values in England and will send you the amount at your request. According to the information that both you and Father Grandidier have furnished, I think it is better to take the Steamship line which stops at New York since the crossing price shouldn't be as expensive. So, prepare to be able to leave on the 15th from Liverpool, but supposing that it is absolutely impossible due to lack of time, you could leave on the 18th for Southampton. That will hardly help you, since it takes time and more money for both of you to get to Southampton. I believe that after you have received my letter you can leave Lys Marie and travel to Leeds to pick up your money (5000 francs) and from there, you can then go non-stop to Liverpool. You will still arrive there on Friday to make your final preparations with Father Grandidier to whom I am also writing this evening so that he is ready. There you will find a rather long letter from me giving you your last instructions.

Farewell, very dear Father Fouquet. Enough for today. I greet you affectionately in Christo.

C. Aubert O.M.I., P[rie]st.

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<sup>86</sup> Orig.: Ottawa, Deschâtelets Archives, HPK 5263. F77Z 7.

**53 - [To Father Léon Fouquet at Liverpool].<sup>87</sup>**

*Orders and advice before leaving. Father Louis d'Herbomez has been named Vicar of Missions in Oregon, and Father Fouquet is first consultant.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Marseilles, October 12, 1859.

Reverend and dear Father,

No doubt you have received my last letter which definitely informed you what route to take and the day you should leave. You will have proceeded accordingly and after obtaining your money at Leeds at Father Pinet's residence, you will have gone to Liverpool to join Father Grandidier and prepare yourself both to set sail on the 15th of this month. So, I have just enough time to send you my note, hoping that no obstacle will hinder you from receiving it at least on Saturday morning, since it would be unfortunate if you didn't receive it since it speaks of some important matters. And, first of all, I have several points to touch concerning yourself.

1. – All four chalices are for Oregon; you have been told this once already, but they are not consecrated, neither are the church objects and ornaments sent to Oregon blest.

2. – I sent by mail to Liverpool six copies of the recently-printed Rule book for the Lay Brothers of the Congregation. They are for the Brothers of your Vicariate. I have also sent you several issues (the last ones) of the *Gazette du Midi*. For some time now we have sent it to our Fathers in Oregon once or twice a month. We will continue doing so, since I presume you will thus be pleased to receive some news about Marseilles and France.

3. – If you disembark at New York, go to stay at Maniort, Douane St., 90. At Aspinwale, Isthmus of Panama, at the home of Chevalier and Moreau. At San Francisco, ask for Father Thomas Ciam, Catholic Chapel, Vallejo St. If he is not home, go to the Abbé Blaise, at the French church and give Father Bermond's name as recommendation.

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<sup>87</sup> Orig.: Ottawa, Deschâtelets Archives HPK 5263. F77Z 8.

4. – If you happen to meet with difficulties in San Francisco, go to see Mister Fouchard, Marzion House. He knows Father Bermond and it would help you if you use his name.

5. – When you buy tickets in the United States or in California, don't forget to indicate that you are a missionary priest, so as to receive the discount which is close to a third.

6. – Besides the trunk, it would be good for each of you to have a traveling bag. It's handy and useful, but even more, you don't pay by weight for anything you have in it, since you will always be carrying it with you and it's not considered baggage.

7. – For the whole trip, till you arrive at our Fathers at Victoria, on Vancouver Island, wear the short soutane. Besides, it would be wise to have also a good woolen wrap because it's cold on the ocean.

8. – I think we forgot, when we made out the order for Father Bermond, to buy one or two small ciboriums and two boxes containing phials for sacred oils. You would do well, if you have time, to pick them up at some goldsmith store in Liverpool. If not, try to buy them in New York.

9. – Three trunks left London at the end of August, bound for Vancouver Island, by the Hudson Bay Company sail boats. They contain new cassocks for our Fathers, chasubles, church ornaments and also books that were requested.

10. – Father Bermond was supposed to fill an order which could not be done. He had received 40 francs to buy a dozen small containers of a certain ointment to cure or preserve eyesight. When you arrive at San Francisco, return this money to the one who gave it to Father Bermond, a certain Mister Bazin, a tailor. Father Thomas, a Chinese priest at the chapel on Vallejo Street knows him and will give you his address.

In closing, I do not have to remind you of what O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General told you about the situation of our affairs in Oregon and especially what there is to do for the good of our missions, whether in regard to persons or materials. You know that you are to spend at least some time with Father d'Herbomez who has been named Vicar, with you as his first consultor and admonitor. We hope that you will do everything that depends on you so that all will go well.

Please write to us from time to time, and especially give us news of yourself and your companion during your trip.

Farewell, dear Father Fouquet. My regards to good Father Grandidier. I remain always your devoted brother in Christo.

C. Aubert.

**54 - [To Father John Mary Noble, in England].<sup>88</sup>**

*A loan to be made for the construction of an Oblate house at Leith.*

[Marseilles], October 18, 1859.

Dear Reverend Father,

I cannot answer you by a simple telegraphic yes or no, as there are some essential remarks to make upon the condition required for the deeds of transfer about the property of Leith. You have indeed succeeded much better than anyone could expect in such intricate a business. However the clause which binds the Fathers who will sign the bond for £2,000 to remain in their stead is certainly unpleasant and may create some difficulties. It obliges us to always have four priests in Scotland, at least as long as the debt is not paid. Could you not obtain that instead of that very annoying clause we could be bound to remain in one of the three kingdoms, what I suppose is quite sufficient for the security as the creditors may have an action against their debtors in England, in Ireland as well as in Scotland or if this cannot be obtained let the number of those who will sign the bills be three instead of four.

Now we cannot deny that if Mr. Pugin on whom you rely for getting a loan of money to enable you to pay the £2000, would not or rather could not do you that service, there should arise a serious difficulty, though you think it not very great, because you suppose the building of a new house would have increased the value of the property, and therefore made the fact of borrowing money much easier. Nevertheless I should advise you to try to have the Bishop sharing also a portion of those difficulties by being one of the four persons who will sign the bond, or at least by taking the responsibility of borrowing after two years the £2000 if Mr. Pugin does not lend them. Those remarks, though

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<sup>88</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, pp. 239-240. Original English.

be made up by the other members of our Superior General's council. However, I am convinced their being fulfilled is not absolutely required. Therefore you may act according to the plan you have submitted to your last letter and thus bring the affair to its conclusion immediately. The only thing which ought to be deferred till the said council has been assembled and its opinion communicated to you is the question, not of building a house for the community (this may be considered as granted) but of the house having one storey added to the original plan, which will increase the expenses by £1000. There is not such a hurry to have that question settled. You will have it so, in my next letter. As for the money you want now for paying the interests and the expenses of the legal transactions for the transfer, I think you may rely upon £100, taken from the money we are about to send from France.

Adieu very dear Father Noble. Believe me forever yours sincerely

Signed: C. Aubert pr D.D. O.M.I.

The two brothers should arrive here about the 15th of next November. Therefore let them leave England about the 10th.

**55 - Mister Soullier, Superior of the Missionary Oblates of Mary, at Autun. Saône and Loire. Pressée.<sup>89</sup>**

*Father Vincens is preaching in Belgium. Father Louis Soullier remains Superior of Autun. Father A.B. Audruger will preach Advent sermons at Saint Brieuc.*

L.J.C. et M.I.

Marseilles, October 21, 1859.

Reverend Father,

I had sent Father Audruger a copy of a letter addressed to your Provincial,<sup>90</sup> which, in the latter's absence, was opened and read by O[ur] M[ost] R[evere]nd Superior General. When I returned from Aix where I had gone to make a Canonical Visitation of our house, I found at Le Calvaire the two letters you had recently written to Reverend Father Vincens. Thinking that there might have been something urgent

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<sup>89</sup> Orig.: AGR, Casimir Aubert file.

<sup>90</sup> Father A. Vincens.

demanding a prompt reply that your Provincial could not give you at this moment from deep in Belgium, where he was preaching a retreat, I took a rapid glance at those letters, yet enough to convince me that I was able to reply to only one article, namely, the change concerning yourself and I foresee that my reply will not set you at ease. In fact, the news that you seem to receive with joy is neither true nor founded on anything that might make it probable. You still are and will remain Superior of Autun and, if for some unforeseen need you would be removed from there, it would mean only that you would have the same duties elsewhere. Reverend Father Vincens will reply about the other matters.

Now I give you that copy I just spoke about which announces something that is good for you as well as Father Audruger to know. The Bishop of Saint Briec<sup>91</sup> wrote to your Provincial: "Dear Father, even though we are only a small city of 15,000 people, the middle class is rather numerous and kind of likes brilliant things. It would thus be good if the Reverend Father Audruger, who is to be our Advent preacher, would give some dazzling sermons during the first days. Accept the assurance, etc." I said it was good for you to know of this commitment of Reverend Father Vincens with the Bishop of Saint Briec, so that you do not count on Father Audruger next December. It is wise that the latter knows of it also for his own plans; please let him know about it.

Farewell, dear Father Soullier. My best regards to all our Fathers at Autun. I remain always your devoted brother in Christo et M[ari]a Im[maculata].

C. Aubert O.M.I., P[rie]st.  
Assist[ant], Secret[ary] Gen[eral].

## 56 - [To Father Robert-Marie Cooke, Provincial in England.<sup>92</sup>

*Father G.M. Bennett is making the retreat with the Fathers of Marseilles and will then return to Sicklinghall as assistant Novice Master. Father Léon Fouquet has left for Oregon. The Province has accepted too many works that it cannot succeed in maintaining, especially at Leith. The community at Liverpool must be reinforced by sending Father Laurent Simonet there. Everything is going well at Dublin. News. Greetings.*

<sup>91</sup> Bishop E. Elisée Martial of Saint Briec from 1858 to 1861.

<sup>92</sup> Copy: APR DM X, Register of Letters 1855-1863, pp. 245-247. Original English.

Marseilles, October 30, 1859.

Very Rev<sup>d</sup> Dear Father,

I am in receipt of your last note and though, being much taken by the spiritual exercises of our Annual retreat, I will not let it be over before having answered you. Father Bennett is one of the followers of our exercises, he seems much pleased with the whole and gives edification to all here by his regularity, piety and good behaviour. He, of course, would be disposed to stay yet a good deal longer in France, but I suppose he cannot delay much his going back to Sicklinghall, now that there are but... priests one of whom is a novice. I should send him back therefore at least about the end of next November.

It is a pity he and Father Boisramé cannot better agree, being on and the other as they really are both so good, so pious and so well qualified in many respects. Your opinion is that the change of the master of novices would not be for better, then we will leave things as they are, but I am afraid there will be very little understanding between Father Bennet and Father Boisramé unless you yourself interfere oftener than you did heretofore.

As for the suggestion of keeping Father Fouquet for some time in our British province, it was not practicable in that Father being so much wanted in Oregon he is now gone some days ago. Others did the same and the last of three French Fathers destined to foreign missions is about to start for Cape Town whence he shall proceed to Natal.

Thus your number is now reduced in such a manner that your many services in the houses of the province are likely to meet with some difficulty. I foresaw that state of things when I opposed the undertaking of new works whatsoever good and laudable they might be. Now our Liverpool community is quite inadequate to their heavy labour. I do not understand why that mission being the best you have both for its number and for its income is the worst provided for, there being generally only three priests, out of whom no one from the country. You cannot certainly dispense from putting there, especially when the new church will be opened, another priest either (sic) or English. Viz the priest who will have ended his novitiate at that time. Meanwhile you may send to Liverpool Father Simonet who can be spared at Leith, that mission being not able now to support more than two priests and a lay brother according to Father Noble's statement. A propos of the Leith mission it

seems to me very strange that when last summer you and Father Pinet have been on the spot to examine the situation there for the temporal interests of the undertaking you did not better ascertain the real state of things, for, I am sure, you never will consent to begin establishments in such conditions, namely with dreadful debts and an insufficient income. Well now, it has been happy to get Mr. Pugin lending to you so much money as to make you able to extricate the property from its embarrassments and even to build immediately a new house, which is so much wanted. Father Noble has written to let me know all the particulars of that affair and finally the way it has been settled. I see thereby that this good Father is really very zealous for success of that mission and that he understand very well business matters. I am glad to hear that your Dublin affairs either temporal or spiritual go on satisfactorily. Our fathers there are all working for the good of souls and the glory of God, and the material constructions are progressing without your being obliged to contract any debt. But is it that the reformatory schools though in a good footing as far as the system followed by our people there is concerned, is yet on a very precarious state in a pecuniary point of ...? We have been told that perhaps it will not stand on account of wanting of support.

The two lay brothers for the Ceylon schools have safely arrived here some days since. They will remain here about fifteen days before leaving for India. Adieu Dear Father Cooke. I think to have handed the questions I wished to speak of in this letter. All here are pretty well specially our beloved Sup. General who is enjoying his usual good health. Adieu, again my love to all in Dublin. Pray for me and believe me.

Yours sincerely in Xto.

C. Aubert, p[rie]st, O.M.I., D.D.



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