

BLESSED EUGENE de MAZENOD

SELECTED TEXTS

RELATED TO THE

O.M.I. CONSTITUTIONS
AND RULES



ROME 1984

Ce nom de Notre Seigneur Jésus
Le Très-Saint Sacrament de la Sainte
Eucharistie et de son saint
Le Corps de Joseph
promette
perpetuelle
jusqu'à la fin
Société des Missions
Dieu me soit en
à Dieu à l.

1815

Elguy de Harcourt
Commissaire



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RELATED TO THE

O.M.I. CONSTITUTIONS AND RULES

TRANSLATED BY
BASTIAMPILLAI RAYAPPU O.M.I.



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Translated by Bastiampillai Rayappu O.M.I.

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PRESENTATION

L.J.C. et M.I.

Rome. March 25, 1984.
Solemnity of the Annunciation.

With great joy I present this collection of texts of our Founder, Blessed Eugene de Mazenod, to the members of the Congregation. It is neither a study nor a commentary on the *Constitutions and Rules*, but rather a guide, a light which will help us to read and better understand them with the spirit of him who gave us birth in the Church as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

This work was prepared by the late Father Paul Sion, who compiled the texts and substantially composed the « preliminary remarks ». It is his last gift, a posthumous gift, to his fellow Oblates.

Father Yvon Beaudoin, the new General Archivist, has been kind enough to examine the manuscript, verify the texts and references, make the necessary additions and subtractions, and thus get this book ready for printing. I thank

him wholeheartedly. I also want to express my gratitude to Father Bastiampillai Rayappu, who so generously accepted to prepare this English edition.

In offering this book to the members of the Congregation, may I be permitted to express a wish: that it become, for each one of us, an inseparable companion to our *Constitutions and Rules*.

Yours devotedly in our Lord and Mary Immaculate.

FERNAND JETTE, O.M.I.
Superior General

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

1. This book does *not* intend to be a *true commentary* in the strict sense on the Constitutions and Rules. Rather, it is a collection of the *writings of our Father and Founder* that could clarify the new text by indicating its sources, continuity and underlying inspiration. On this count, it could be very useful for future commentaries, and for personal and community reflection on our Oblate life. The welcome accorded to the few excerpts from the Founder's Rule inserted into the Proposed Text of the Constitutions and Rules was an encouragement to proceed in this direction.

2. This is a selection made after reading all the Founder's writings: his letters, Diary, acts of visitation, pastoral letters. Obviously, any selection has its advantages, but also entails some disadvantages. Furthermore, it presupposes a certain orientation of thought. While being careful to respect the Founder's mind, I have been guided by the following main *criteria*:

- Except in a few instances, preference is given

to *fairly long passages* that form a whole, so as not to break the thought sequence. Brief phrases, perhaps quite apropos, nevertheless give room for different interpretations if they are removed from their context.

- Some texts that are linked too much to a particular place, time or person have been omitted, even though their content may be valuable. They are available in the complete edition of the Founder's Letters. Rather than compile detailed prescriptions, I have sought and retained texts that manifest *the spirit* which the Founder wanted to communicate to his Congregation.
- Certain passages from the retreat notes and the Diary were chosen because they bring out, not only what the Founder required of his sons or counselled them, but also what *he himself* had, at times, experienced in similar situations: his difficulties and sufferings, his joys and hopes, his desires and availability. This last point is worth mentioning with regard to the apparent contradictions. Some of the writings present categoric decisions, but their concrete application is sometimes otherwise: for example, in what concerns teaching, parishes, and preaching. The underlying intention and aim remain, but with a flexibility depending on circumstances of the moment or on further developments. Dates are

important. Hence we must be careful lest we take certain texts too literally.

3. In spite of these precautions, we cannot hide the *limitations* of a collection such as this. These texts do not form a complete treatise on religious and apostolic spirituality. Most of them were written as life went along, according to the circumstances: some elements are clearly stressed, but some lacunae are also evident.

Furthermore, these writings are and remain characteristic of a particular age with its socio-political realities, its religious mentality and own sensitivity. The Second Vatican Council brought new insights; our theology on the Church, on missionary evangelization and on religious life has evolved; awareness of the world's needs and aspirations has become more acute in such areas as justice, the role of the laity, the place of women.

4. The numerous topics, divided according to the different chapters of the Constitutions and Rules, are like so many bells that form a great carillon. All of them do not have the same importance, nor did the Founder over almost half a century as Superior repeat them with the same frequency and persistence; as a whole, however, they do express what he wanted his religious and apostolic family to be, with its charism, its spirit, its purpose and special character.

5. This *return to the sources* is meant to be stimulating. We hear the Founder's heartbeat in these lines which were often written in a hurry but always lived in depth. His dynamism, resulting from his passionate love for the Saviour, from his apostolic zeal and fidelity to the Spirit, is still a challenge to us today.

PAUL SION, O.M.I.

I. THE ORIGINS OF THE OBLATE CHARISM

1 — Preface to the Constitutions and Rules.

The Church, that glorious inheritance purchased by Christ the Saviour at the cost of his own blood, has in our days been cruelly ravaged...

Faced with such a deplorable situation, the Church earnestly appeals to the ministers whom she herself enrolled in the cause of her divine Spouse, to do all in their power, by word and example, to rekindle the flame of faith that has all but died in the hearts of so many of her children...

How vast the field that lies before them! How worthy and holy the undertaking! The people are caught up in crass ignorance of all that pertains to their salvation. The consequence of their ignorance has been a weakening of the faith and a corruption of morals

with all the licence which that inevitably entails. Thus, it is supremely important, it is urgently imperative, that we lead the multitude of lost sheep back to the fold, that we teach these degenerate Christians who Jesus Christ is, that we rescue them from Satan's power and show them the way to eternal life. We must spare no effort to extend the Saviour's empire and to destroy the dominion of hell. We must check the manifold evils of sin and establish the honoured observance of every virtue. We must lead men to act like human beings, first of all, and then like Christians, and, finally, we must help them to become saints.

Such are the great works of salvation that can crown the efforts of priests whom God has inspired with the desire to form themselves into a Society in order to work more effectively for the salvation of souls and for their own sanctification. To bring all this into being, they must carry out their duty worthily, faithfully fulfilling their splendid vocation.

(Rules of 1826. Mss. Post.)

2 — The Founder's first letter to Father Tempier, October 15, 1815.

An appeal which we, too, have heard; we gain in rereading and pondering it.

My dear friend, read this letter at the foot of your crucifix with a mind to heed only God and what is demanded in the interests of his glory and of the salvation of souls from a priest like yourself. Stifle the voice of cupidity, love of comfort and convenience; dwell deeply on the plight of our country people, their religious situation, the apostasy that daily spreads wider with dreadfully ravaging effects. Look at the feebleness of the means employed to date to oppose this flood of evil; ask your heart what it fain would do to counter these disasters and then reply to my letter.

Well, dear man, what I say to you, without going fully into details, is that you are necessary for the work which the Lord inspires us to undertake. Since the head of the Church is persuaded that, given the wretched state in which France finds herself, only missions can bring people back to the Faith which they have practically abandoned, good men of the Church from dif-

ferent dioceses are banding together in response to the views of our supreme Pastor. We likewise feel that it is utterly necessary to employ the same remedy in our regions and, full of confidence in the goodness of Providence, have laid down the foundations of an establishment which will steadily furnish our countryside with fervent missionaries. These will ceaselessly engage in destroying the empire of the demon, at the same time as providing the example of a life worthy of the Church in the community which they will form. Indeed, we will live together in one house, that which I have bought, under a Rule we shall adopt with common accord and for which we will draw the elements from the statutes of St. Ignatius, of St. Charles for his Oblates, of St. Philip Neri, of St. Vincent de Paul and of the Blessed Liguori.

Happiness awaits us in this holy Society which will have but one heart and soul. One part of the year will be devoted to the conversion of souls, the other to seclusion, study and our individual sanctification. I say no more for the moment; it suffices to give some intimation of the spiritual delights we will taste together. If, as I hope, you wish

to be one of us, you will not find yourself in unknown terrain; you will have four companions. If presently we are not more numerous, it means we wish to choose men who have the will and the courage to walk in the footsteps of the apostles. It is important to lay solid foundations. The greatest regularity must be planned and introduced in the house as soon as we enter it. And it is precisely for that reason that you are necessary to me because I know you to be capable of embracing an exemplary rule of life and of persevering in it...

When I shall have your reply, I will give you all the details you could wish for. But, dear friend, I conjure you, do not let yourself say no to the greatest good that may possibly be done in the Church. Vicars will easily be found to replace you but it is not so easy to come across men who are dedicated and wish to devote themselves to the glory of God and the salvation of souls with no more reward on earth than much sorrow and all else that the Saviour announced to his true disciples. Your refusal would be incalculably detrimental to our newborn enterprise. I speak with sincerity and reflection. Your modesty will suffer but no mat-

ter. I will not hesitate to add that, if I believed it necessary to make the journey to Arles to convince you, I would wing my way there. All depends on how we begin. We need perfect unanimity of sentiments, the same goodwill, the same disinterestedness, the same devotedness — that sums it up.

(Rey I, 181-182)

3 — Reply of Father Tempier, October 27, 1815.

After learning the source of this unsigned letter, he hastened to write:

May the good God be blessed for having inspired you with the plan to provide the poor inhabitants of our countryside, those who have the most need of instruction in our religion, with a house of missionaries who will go and announce to them the truths of salvation. I share entirely your views, my dear brother, and far from waiting for new overtures to enter upon this holy work so in keeping with my desires, I avow on the contrary that had I known your intention, I would have been the first to beg you to re-

ceive me into your Society. So it is for me to thank you for having judged me worthy to work for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. It is true that I do not see in myself the ability to preach necessary to a missionary but *alius quidem sic alius vero sic*. What I shall not do with great discourses, I will do in teaching catechism, in giving talks, in hearing confessions, and by all other means which can establish the reign of Jesus Christ in souls. I find nothing inferior and painful in this. Meanwhile, practice will make it easier for me than it is now. Furthermore, I can see what you are looking for most in choosing your collaborators. You want priests who do not follow the rut of routine and daily hum-drum... but who are ready to walk in the footsteps of the Apostles and to labour for the salvation of souls, without expecting any reward on earth other than plenty of suffering and fatigue. By the grace of God, I do feel this desire in me, or if I do not have it, I greatly desire to have it; and, with you beside me, everything will become even easier. So you can count fully on me.

(Rey I, 183)

4 — The Founder's second letter to Father Tempier, November 15, 1815.

God be blessed, my very dear brother, for the dispositions he has put in your good heart. You would not believe the joy I felt on reading your letter. I opened it anxiously but soon was comforted. Be sure that I regard it as most important that you be one of us. I count on you more than on myself for the regularity of a house which, in my mind and my hopes, must reproduce the perfection of the first disciples of the apostles. I base my hopes on that much more than on eloquent discourses. Have they ever converted anyone?

Oh! how well will you do what must be done! Were you but close enough for me to press to my heart, give you a fraternal accolade, that would express better than any letter the sentiments with which the good God has inspired me in your regard. How sweet the bonds of perfect charity!

(Rey I, 184)

5 — Request of authorization addressed to the Vicars General of Aix, January 25, 1816.

To the Capitular Vicars General.
Gentlemen:

The undersigned priests:

— deeply moved by the deplorable situation of the small towns and villages of Provence that have almost completely lost the faith;

— knowing from experience that the callousness or indifference of these people renders the ordinary help supplied by your concern for their salvation insufficient and even useless;

— convinced that missions are the only means by which these people who have gone astray can be brought out of their degradation;

— desirous, at the same time, of responding to the call which summons them to consecrate themselves to this arduous ministry;

— and wishing to accomplish it in a manner as useful to themselves as it is ad-

vantageous for the people whom they propose to evangelize;

have the honour of requesting from you the authorization to come together at Aix in the old house of the Carmelites which one of them has acquired; and to live there in community under a Rule whose main points they now indicate to you.

The end of this Society is not only to work for the salvation of one's neighbour by dedicating itself to the ministry of preaching; its chief aim also includes providing its members with the means necessary to practise the virtues of religion to which they are so strongly attracted that the greater number of them would consecrate themselves for life to their observance in some religious Order, did they not nurture the hope of finding in the Missionaries' community more or less the same advantages as in the religious state to which they wanted to pledge themselves.

If they have preferred to form a regular community of Missionaries, it is in an effort to be useful to the diocese, while at the same time working at their own sanctification, in conformity with their vocation.

Thus their life will be spent in prayer, in

meditating the sacred truths, in practising the virtues of religion, in studying Sacred Scripture, the holy Fathers, dogmatic and moral theology, in preaching and in the direction of youth.

The Missionaries will divide their group in such a way that while some strive in community to acquire the virtues and knowledge proper to a good missionary, others are touring the rural areas proclaiming the word of God.

When their apostolic journeys are over, they will return to the community to rest from their labours by exercising a ministry that is less demanding, and to prepare themselves through meditation and study for a more fruitful ministry when next called upon to undertake new work.

On entering the Society, the Missionaries must resolve to persevere in it until the end of their lives.

The Society is pledged to keep each of its members despite infirmities that may arise either from old age or from the labours of their ministry.

It accepts no obligations with regard to those who may leave its ranks.

Towards the Society each member assumes the obligation of living in obedience to the superior and of observing the statutes and regulations.

The Society is governed by a superior elected for life by its members and approved by the local Ordinary.

Those who present themselves for admission into the Society will be tested in a novitiate until they finish their studies or are judged fit for the work of the missions.

The Missionaries will be accepted into the Society definitively only after two years of probation.

Those who have been accepted into the Society may be sent away only for serious reasons on the request of the superior plus a two-thirds majority voted assent of the other Missionaries.

When neighbouring dioceses have provided the Society with men suited for service in the missions, the superior may, when requested by the Bishops and with the permission of the Ordinary, send them on missions to the diocese from which they came; and, if necessary, add to their number some of their companions, even if these latter are from the diocese of Aix.

The House of the Mission will be totally exempt from the jurisdiction of the parish priest. It is subject only to the Ordinary. In this matter, it will enjoy the privileges of former religious houses.

The church which the Missionaries have in their charge will also be under the immediate jurisdiction and supervision of the local Ordinary.

Vicars General and Gentlemen: Such is a comprehensive outline of the regulations the undersigned priests present for your approval in requesting your authorization to form a community.

Done at Aix, January 25, 1816.

Eugene de Mazenod, Tempier, Icard, Mie, Maunier, Deblieu.

(Mss. Post., DM. IX 1)

II. THE MISSION OF THE CONGREGATION

IN IMITATION OF CHRIST (1)

6 — To the Missionaries of Aix, July 1816.

P.S. I wish you to change the end of our litanies; instead of saying *Jesu sacerdos*, we must say *Christe salvator*. That is the aspect under which we ought to contemplate our divine Master. Our particular vocation is such that we are associated in a special manner with the redemption of men; the Blessed Liguori has likewise put his Con-

(1) Other texts of the Founder on this topic are found in the following essays:

- D'ADDIO A., O.M.I., *Cristo crocifisso e la chiesa abbandonata. Eugenio de Mazenod: un appassionato di Cristo e della chiesa*. Frascati, 1978. *Quaderni di Vermicino*, n. 4, 218 pp.
- Idem. *Eugène de Mazenod et le Christ*, in *Vie Oblate Life*, t. 38 (1979), pp. 169-200.

gregation under the protection of the Saviour. Would that we all endeavour, by the sacrifice of our entire being, not to render his redemption useless, both in regard to ourselves and in regard to those whom we are called upon to evangelize.

(Rambert I, 190-191)

7 — To Father Tempier, August 22, 1817.

But who are we indeed that the good God should listen to our pleas? We are, or we ought to be, holy priests who consider themselves happy and very happy to devote their fortune, their health, their life in the service and for the glory of our God. We are put on earth, particularly those of our house, to sanctify ourselves while helping each other by our example, our words and our prayers. Our Lord Jesus Christ has left to us the task of continuing the great work of the redemption of mankind. It is towards this unique end that all our efforts must tend; as long as we will not have spent our whole life and given all our blood to achieve this, we can say nothing; especially when as yet we have given only a few drops of sweat and

a few spells of fatigue. This spirit of being wholly devoted to the glory of God, the service of the Church and the salvation of souls, is the spirit that is proper to our Congregation, a small one, to be sure, but which will always be powerful as long as she is holy. Our novices must steep themselves in these thoughts, which must sink deep in them and be often meditated.

(Yevngux VIII, 9-10; Rambert I, 236-237)

8 — Constitutions and Rules of 1818.

Nota bene: What more sublime purpose than that of their Institute? Their founder is Jesus Christ, the very Son of God; their first fathers are the Apostles. They are called to be the Saviour's co-workers, the co-redeemers of mankind; and even though, because of their present small number and the more urgent needs of the people around them, they have to limit the scope of their zeal, for the time being, to the poor of our countryside and others, their ambition should, in its holy aspirations, embrace the vast expanse of the whole earth.

(Duval ed. p. 15)

9 — **Retreat Notes**, October 8, 1831.

Will we ever have an adequate notion of this sublime vocation? For this, we must understand the excellence of our Institute's end. The latter is beyond doubt the most perfect that could be proposed here below, since the end of our Institute is the very same as that which the Son of God had in view when he came on this earth, namely, the glory of his heavenly Father and the salvation of souls. « *Venit enim filius hominis quaerere et salvum facere quod perierat* » (Lk. 19:10). He was especially sent to preach the Gospel to the poor, « *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me* », and we have been founded precisely to work for the conversion of souls, and particularly to preach the Gospel to the poor.

« *Finis huius parvae Societatis est ut fratres habitantes in unum praecipuam dent operam pauperibus evangelizandis, virtutes et exempla Salvatoris N.J.C. assidua imitatione prosequendo* » (Art. 1, ch. I, p. 1, De Fine).

The means we use to achieve this end share its excellence. They are unquestionably the most perfect, since they are the very

same ones used by our divine Saviour, his Apostles, and Disciples, namely, the strict practice of the evangelical counsels, preaching and prayer, a happy blend of the active and contemplative life, of which Jesus Christ and the Apostles have given us the example. By this very fact, this is beyond any doubt the culminating point of the perfection which God has given us the grace to accept, and of which our Rules are only the development...

Everything is there: « *Virtutes et exempla Salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi assidua imitatione proseguendo* ». Let these words be engraved in our hearts, let them be written everywhere so that they are ever before our eyes. The more I progress, the more I am overwhelmed, amazed and carried away by our sublime destiny...

Could any one think that the Rule has already insisted sufficiently on the indispensable need to imitate Jesus Christ? No, It further presents the Saviour to us as the real Founder of the Congregation; and the Apostles, who were the first to walk in the footsteps of their teacher, as our first fathers. Could there be anything more urgent than this to induce us to imitate them? Jesus

is our Founder; the Apostles, our fore-runners, our first fathers! It is the Church who teaches us this; it is Peter, through the lips of Leo, who tells us this. Let us swear to be faithful, to become worthy of our great calling!

« Jam dictum est Missionarios, quantum humana patitur fragilitas, imitari debere in omnibus exempla Xti. Domini, praecipui Institutoris Congregationis, necnon Apostolorum nostri progenitorum ».

Must we, therefore, live as they lived, exercise the ministry they exercised, practice their virtues? Absolutely!...

(Mss. Post., DM IV 3)

10 — To Father Courtès, at Aix, August 27, 1837.

Once again I recommend Brother Jean whom I am sending to you, because it is essential that our Brothers be perfectly about their duties; that they clearly understand that their vocation is supernatural, that they form part of an association which they must honour by their good behaviour and their religious virtues. For this it is necessary to

instruct them diligently, make them observe the Rule scrupulously, prove to them that they are not looked upon as domestic servants, that we see them as brothers; but also, that you have the right to require them to observe perfect regularity, to be humble, obedient, etc.. They must be present at all the common exercises, at morning and evening oraison, at the examination of conscience; they must come to pray their Breviary when the Fathers gather together for theirs, and withdraw when they have finished it.

(*Mss. Post.*)

APOSTOLIC MEN

« *In the footsteps of the Apostles* » (1)

11 — **To Father Tempier, December 13, 1815.**

After announcing his forthcoming visit to the community of the missionaries at Aix, Tempier did not see in himself « the ability to preach necessary to a missionary » (Rey I,

(1) For other texts on this topic: cfr.

— M. GILBERT, *Sur les traces des apôtres*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 16 (1957), pp. 293-301.

183), but the Founder had seen in him a « man of interior life »; and so he replied to him:

Be as humble as you wish but know, just the same, that you are necessary for this mission work. I speak to you before God and openly from my heart. Were it a question of going out to preach more or less well the word of God, mingled with much alloy of self, of going far and wide for the purpose, if you wish, of winning souls for God without taking much trouble to be men of interior life, truly apostolic men, I think it would not be difficult to replace you. But can you believe I want merchandise of that sort? We must be truly saints ourselves. In saying that, we include all that can possibly be said.

(Rambert I, 171)

12 — To Forbin-Janson, October 9, 1816.

If I were you, I would aim at somewhat less brilliance and I would insist more on soundness. Of what use are fine speeches if one is conceited? Humility, the spirit of abnegation, obedience, etc., and the utmost in

the way of fraternal charity are also necessary for the good order and the happiness of a society. Not all your people have properly understood that.

(Mss. Paris. arch. de la Sainte Enfance)

13 — To Father Arbaud, Vicar General of Digne, January 1, 1819.

We need men who are detached, zealous for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, in a word, intent on following and practising the evangelical counsels. Without this, little or no good can be expected of them. The missions are the apostolic work par excellence. If we wish to achieve the same results as the Apostles and the first followers of the Gospel, we must use the same means as they, and this all the more because we do not have the power to perform miracles and so we must bring back those who have gone astray by the splendour of our virtues. I am embarrassed as I pen these lines. Alas! no one understands better than I do that it is easier to teach by word than by example.

(Yenveux VIII, 12)

14 — **To Father Viguier, of the diocese of Digne, who was contemplating on joining the Society, January 6, 1819.**

The missionary, being specifically called to the apostolic ministry, should aim at perfection. The Lord destines him to show forth anew, amongst those of his own time, the marvellous things that were done of old by the first preachers of the Gospel. He ought then to walk in their footsteps while being firmly persuaded that the miracles he must do are not the effect of his eloquence but of the grace of the Almighty who will communicate himself through him with all the more abundance if he is more virtuous, more humble, or, to say it all in one word, more holy. So he ought to do everything to arrive at this desirable holiness which is to produce such great effects. What we have found most apt to help us attain thereto is to come as close as we can to the evangelical counsels, faithfully observed by all those who have been employed by Jesus Christ in the great work of the redemption of souls.

(Yenveux VIII, 11)

15 — **To Father Tempier, March 30, 1826.**

I did not understand what Fr. Courtès meant by the humiliations about which he spoke to me. I suppose he means the disregard of those for whom we are going to sacrifice ourselves. This is a rather small misfortune.

My only wish is that we preach in a beneficial manner, putting aside all selfishness. Without this, not much good can be done. I hope that our Fathers are also firmly determined to act with great prudence, since they have to deal with men who are so ill-disposed. Advise them to behave like saints, true apostles, adding to their preaching exterior modesty and a great love for sinners. It should be evident from their behaviour that they are not just ordinary preachers, but men truly animated by a zeal proper to their holy vocation. Let them not neglect themselves if they wish to be useful to others. Consequently they should pray much. Then the good Lord will come to their aid, and everything will go well.

(Missions O.M.I. 1872, 285)

16 — **Memoirs of the Founder, circa 1845.**

I have said that my intention in dedicating myself to the ministry of the missions to work especially for the instruction and conversion of the most abandoned souls, was to follow the example of the Apostles in their life of devotedness and self-denial. I became convinced that, in order to obtain the same results from our preaching, we had to walk in their footsteps and as far as we could, practise the same virtues. Hence I considered choosing the evangelical counsels, to which they had been so faithful, as indispensable, lest our words be no more than what I have often noticed about the words of those who proclaim the same truths, namely sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. My consistent thought has even been that our little family should consecrate itself to God and to the service of the Church through the vows of religion...

Briefly put, Father Tempier and I felt that we should not delay any longer, and on Holy Thursday (April 11, 1816), when both of us had taken our place under the structure of the beautiful repository we had erected over the main altar of the Mission church,

in the night of that holy day, we pronounced our vows with an indescribable joy... and we prayed the divine Master that, if it were his holy will to bless our undertaking, to lead our present companions and those who would be associated with us in the future, to appreciate the full value of this oblation of one's entire self to God, when one wanted to serve him unreservedly and to consecrate one's life to the spread of his holy Gospel and the conversion of souls. Our petitions were answered.

(Rambert I, 187-188)

17 — To Brothers Surel and Janin, in Oregon, March 11, 1852.

You earnestly requested to be sent to the foreign missions. Surely you did not expect to lead a delicate and easy life. It is known that this sort of mission crucifies human nature, and that there is much to suffer in them. So it should not have astonished you to find many difficulties there; that is precisely what arouses the zeal and the fervour of all those who ask to be preferred for such appointments. My dear children, you should

therefore not become so troubled about this as to lose your peace of soul. As for what you fear, which is to be left without resources for your old age, I cannot conceive how this fear has entered into your head. Is not the Congregation obliged to provide for all your needs while you are on earth, just as it must furnish the means for you to go to heaven, your true home?

(Yenveux I, suppl. III)

18 — **To Father Vandenberghe, master of novices at N.D. de l'Osier, December 6, 1852.**

There is only enough time to recommend the postulant novice whom I am directing to you. He is a person of good will, capable of making the greatest sacrifices for the sake of the good Lord for whom he is giving up all the good things he could have in the world. I want to tell you that he is not fit for very heavy manual work; you must not think of entrusting him with tilling the soil or gardening. His talents are of a different nature, which should be used in the Congregation, perhaps in some house where we

impart education. He is very good at calligraphy and it would be difficult to find a better teacher. I give you this information lest you make a mistake. It is a question of forming him to the religious life and of developing in him the germ of the virtues that the good Lord has placed in his heart, together with an excellent good-will and perfect devotedness. Make a good religious out of him and require from him only that of which he is capable and for which he is endowed. I repeat it, that will be some sedentary and artistic work, if need be... I stop here, but I recommend my postulant to you once again, to be careful not to make him get disgusted by trying him beyond his human strength. It may happen that someone outside the novitiate may complain that we did not put a pick-axe in his hands but once again I tell you, I am not sending him to you for that purpose. Marie-Joseph Taix is the name of my postulant. He is a professor of art and hand-writing; he is a musician and he does a thousand and one other things which will make him very valuable for some of our houses. So take good care of him, he is an excellent lad.

(Mss. Post.)

19 — **To Father Mouchette, moderator of scholastics, December 2, 1854.**

Let all Oblates be well imbued with what the Church expects of them. Half-measure virtues are not sufficient to respond to all that their holy vocation demands... They are called to an entirely different kind of perfection. They must strive for it; even more is needed: they must walk in this path to become, in God's hands, the instruments of his mercy. They must know that their ministry continues the ministry of the Apostles, and that it is nothing short of working wonders... Hence they must hasten to become saints, if they are not yet such as they should be.

(Yenveux I, 36)

20 — **To Father Mouchette, February 17, 1859.**

I am penning these few lines, my dearest Father Mouchette, precisely in that very same hour when your entire worthy community, prostrated at the feet of our divine Saviour, is adoring him with gratitude and

fervently renewing the consecration that binds it to him for life, and even beyond it. In my exile what could I do better than betake myself in spirit into your midst, to mingle the sentiments of my heart with yours, and, at the sight of this wonderful union of hearts and holy devotedness, thank God with deep gratitude for having given me such an edifying family, in which every member, prompted by grace, responds so well to his sublime vocation? In each one of them I seem to see an apostle, called by a remarkable favour of God's mercy, similar to those whom our Lord had chosen during his sojourn on this earth, to proclaim everywhere the Good News of salvation: in Europe, to arouse sinners who had forgotten or had never understood that they were Christians; in the far-away regions, to proclaim Christ and to make him known, and to open heaven's door to so many non-believers who, without the help of our men, would never have known or loved God.

(Mss. Post.)

THE CROSS

**21 — To Father Charles de Forbin-Janson,
October 9, 1816.**

In response to the instruction of Pius VII, the zealous Forbin-Janson, together with M. Rauzan, had, in 1814, founded the Missionaries of France.

While on this subject, I take the liberty of telling you that you would have done well to adopt the use of the crucifix, at least during the conducting of your missions. You would hardly believe the effect it produces and how useful it is. People accustomed to ecclesiastical attire are little impressed; but the crucifix to them is awesome. How often have I seen, even amongst libertines, some who, when they see it, cannot help removing their hats. It gives a decided authority; it distinguishes the missionaries from other priests; and that indeed is good because the missionary should be regarded as an extraordinary man. It is useful to the priest in the confessional and, on the day of absolution, it helps the penitent, in whose hands we place it, to conceive sorrow for his sins, to detest them and even to weep because of them. It must needs be that what we have

experienced has at all times been acknowledged since, in other Catholic countries, all missionaries carry it as a sign of authority for their mission, etc. I cannot imagine how you have been prevented by the feeble reasons that those who think you should not carry it have given. This to me is an act of weakness, a shameful tribute that you are willing to give to the philosophy of a small number of persons whose antipathy you should have scorned. It would seem that you are fearful of taking part in the folly of the cross. What shall I say to you? I blame this human prudence. You must be more openly a Christian, a priest and an apostle than you have been in this circumstance. You know that I speak my thoughts frankly. But only to you do I say this. It is not a matter for excuses.

(Paris, Arch. de la Ste. Enfance)

22 — To Father Courtès, February 22, 1825.

While the final text of the Constitutions and Rules was being prepared for approbation, the Founder formulated the following article:

In each house of the Society, in order to provide the members who live therein some

good thoughts about death, there will always be kept in reserve a crucifix which will be hung in some visible place of a common room of the house. It is this crucifix which will be placed in the hands of the deceased and enclosed in the coffin with him.

*(Rules mss. IV, IIeme partie, chap, 4,
para. 2, art. 6, Arch. Post.)
(Yenveux VI, 143)*

23 — To Father Courtès, March 8, 1830.

Crosses of deceased Oblates.

They are to be passed on to other Oblates who will draw great benefit from such a heritage. I would like this distribution to be done with a great sense of justice.

(Rey I, 483)

24 — To Father Courtès, March 13, 1830.

The cross of the deceased Father Arnoux should be given to a young Oblate: no exception will be made except for those who perform miracles.

On reading your bit of a plea concerning Fr. Arnoux's cross, I almost agreed with you

and I felt that the reasons you gave me were well founded. However there would be some inconvenience if we adopted this. One would have to stock a whole load of crosses in our houses, for I hope by God's mercy, that all those who die in the bosom of our Society will reach Heaven, covered with merits, after having edified their brethren and dedicated their lives to the service of the Church and the sanctification of souls. On the supposition that we do give preference to a well-defined greatness, who is to judge whether the required degree of heroism has in fact been attained? Will not such distinctions be odious in a Society wherein everyone is striving to be a saint by performing the same ministry and strictly observing the same Rules? I certainly will not do this discerning. I can see only miracles as being adequate to indicate the exception. Miracles will prove, not that those who did not work any are less holy or lived lives that are less good or died in the Lord less, but that it pleases God to manifest his glory through them and should be distinguished from among the other predestined persons who have entered Heaven without noise, or to put it better, without fanfare.

So far, I see that we do not have to make an exception to the norm I have established.

(Rey I, 483)

25 — **To Father Semeria, in Jaffna, April 16, 1852.**

As for Bishop Bravi's whim in not wanting our Oblates to wear the Crucifix of their profession openly, I cannot agree to that in the ordinary way of their life and in the places where they have missions. If there is any serious reason for not showing the crucifix openly in the city of Colombo, it could there be put under the cassock as is sometimes done elsewhere, so long as the cord is left outside so that it is clear that a man really is wearing this sacred sign of our apostolic mission.

(Mss. Post.)

26 — **To Father Semeria, in Jaffna, July 2, 1852.**

I do not interpret the passage of the letter that you cite in the same way as you

do. He obviously meant that all the missionaries of his vicariate should make up a single family, and that is why he regards it as important that they should not wear the cross. The only concession that I can make in this matter is that our Oblates when they are out of their missions and when they go, for example, to Colombo, should not wear the cross openly, but that they should do what used to be done in France during difficult times, that is, keep the cord outside the cassock, the cross being under the buttons. You can say that this decision comes from me, while granting that it is possible to go to heaven without acting thus, since Bishop Bravi says so...

If necessary, it should be explained that with us the cross is an essential part of our religious habit. We do not wear a hood or a rosary hanging from our belts, but the cross is given on the day of profession as a distinctive sign of our ministry. We do not therefore wear it *ad libitum* as other missionaries do.

(*Mss. Rome*)

27 — **To Father Gaudet, in Texas, June 1, 1860.**

The Oblates will be clearly enough distinguished from any other Congregation, both by the collar of their cassock, and especially by the cross that they receive on the day of their oblation, and which they must always wear on their chest as a sign of their apostolic mission.

(*Yenveux VI, 62*)

THE MOST ABANDONED (1)

28 — **To Father Tempier, March 20, 1826.**

Ah! yes, we must certainly acknowledge that we have received a great grace! The more closely I consider it in all these circumstances, the more I appreciate the value

(1) This topic and that on the Poor have been the subject of many studies where numerous texts of the Founder are quoted, cfr. especially: E. LAMIRANDE, *Les pauvres et les âmes les plus abandonnées d'après Mgr de Mazenod*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 20 (1961), pp. 3-19; H. CHARBONNEAU, *Les pauvres et les âmes abandonnées selon Mgr de Mazenod*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 36 (1977), pp. 127-133.

of this favour. There is only one way in which we can show our appreciation for it: by a fidelity that withstands every test, by redoubling our zeal and dedication to the glory of God, the service of the Church and the salvation of souls, especially the most abandoned, in conformity with our vocation... In the beginning it was thought that we were seeking (the approbation) only for France, and the Cardinal Ponens told me: « Accept that much and the rest will come later ». I did not agree with him, and the matter has been settled according to our wishes... I must add that, to have my standpoint adopted, it sufficed for me to point out that our Congregation did not limit its charity to one small corner of the earth, and that all abandoned souls, wherever they may be, would always be the object of its zeal and have the right to its services.

(Missions 1872, 277-278)

29 — To Father Teston, Vicar General of Grenoble, June 17, 1828.

In a city, during the interval between missions, our missionaries, dedicated as they

are to the service of the abandoned, carry on a very useful ministry among the lowest classes of people. For example, in Marseilles, they care for the scum of society, people who are at the age of 25 or 30, and have not yet made their first Holy Communion, and who do not know their God or their souls; they instruct them carefully, and their labours have been crowned with the greatest success.

(Yenveux I, 34-35)

30 — To the Chevalier de Collegno, January 19, 1831.

In the midst of difficulties and obstacles of all sorts, « exhausted » by « fresh embarrassments », the Founder confides in his friend.

However firm my inner conviction that I would have done everything to acquit myself worthily of the great burden (onus) (1), which they wanted to lay upon me, I assured myself that I could accomplish more good in a more modest career, in this sense that replacements for the high position to which

(1) The episcopacy which he refused several times.

they wanted to assign me were not lacking, whereas probably no one would even dream of caring for these poor neglected souls who can be really helped only by getting very close to them and by caring for all their needs in detail. The success or rather the blessings that God has showered on everything I have undertaken for his glory, either personally or through the ministry of those whom I associated to myself, and above all the Church's paternal approbation obtained as if by a miracle and counter to everyone's expectations, have been ample consolation to me for the pain and the set-backs which the enemy has not failed to cause me.

(*Yenveux V*, 58)

31 — **To Father Honorat**, October 7, 1843.

Concerning a plan for a foundation in Quebec.

You say to me: that is not where the most abandoned souls are. True, but in establishing yourselves there, you provide yourselves with the means to come to the aid of those most abandoned souls, without taking into account that you will also do

much good to many of those who, while not abandoned, are nonetheless in need. Would to God you could take charge of this post tomorrow — I would consent to it. I gave verbal instructions on this matter to Father Telmon. He will discuss it with you. It was on purpose that I made him bearer of a letter to the Bishop of Quebec. He will map out the terrain and take, if necessary, the preliminary steps for a work which I consider of the greatest importance.

(Yenveux VII, 40)

32 — To Father Dassy, superior of the new foundation of Nancy, October 11, 1847.

Do not hesitate to say that we have been especially founded for the small towns and villages and to help the most abandoned souls. I would be afraid that they will try to make you preach too much in the city. We do not have to compete with the great preachers to whom people are used to listening there. That is not our vocation. Re-read the Rules and make their spirit known when necessary.

(Mss. Post.)

33 — **To Bishop Pavy of Algiers, January 5, 1849.**

Bishop de Mazenod writes to Bishop Pavy to inform him about the forthcoming arrival of three Oblates whom he had requested for Blida.

I hope the day will come when you will be able to use them for the conversion of the Arabs. I have never thought that the conversion of these poor Moslems was any more difficult than that of the Chinese. It will be up to you to give the signal when the time comes. It would be better to allow our missionaries to work at their modest ministry, in conformity with their Rule, which lays down that they should work for the salvation of the most wayward souls, rather than give them a cathedral pulpit from which to preach a Lenten Station.

(Yenveux I, 107)*

34 — **To Bishop Dupanloup of Orleans, February 1854.**

« Reserve the poor to them.. ». The reference is to N.D. de Cléry.

I am pleased to see Father Dassy and his companions well established in your diocese.

I hope they will accomplish the good you expect of them. I request you only to remember that they belong to a newborn family and that you must be satisfied with seeing them engaged, in all humility, in the conversion of the most abandoned souls. Reserve the poor to them. Their gift of grace is for this kind of ministry.

(Mss. Nat. Arch. Paris)

35 — To Bishop B. Buissas of Limoges, October 24, 1855.

Each group has its own task. The vocation of our missionaries is to preach the Gospel to the poor and to work for the salvation of the most abandoned souls.

(Yenveux I, 34)

THE POOR

36 — To his mother, June 29, 1808.

Eugene informs her of his decision to enter the Seminary of Saint Sulpice.

I call on the Lord as my witness. What he wants of me... is that I devote myself, in a special way, to his service to try and re-

kindle the faith that is dying out among the poor. In a word, he wants me available to carry out everything he may demand of me for his glory and for the salvation of the souls redeemed by his precious blood.

(Rambert I, 48-49)

37 — Notes for Lenten instructions, March 1813.

Given in the church of the Magdalene at Aix, in Provençal, for the artisans, servants and the poor, on Sunday at 6 a.m.

During this holy season, numerous instructions will be given to the rich and the educated. Will there be none for the poor and the unlearned?... The love of the pastor (of this parish) has seen to that. What a pity it would be if we did not profit from this opportunity! (to make them acknowledge that they do not understand much in scholarly discourses, especially when they are in French).

Nevertheless, the Gospel must be taught to all, and in a way in which it can be understood. The poor, that precious portion of the Christian family, cannot be left in their ignorance.

So important did our divine Saviour consider them that he took it upon himself to instruct them; and he gave as proof that his mission was divine, the fact that the poor were being instructed: *Pauperes evangelizantur.*

In fact, since knowledge of the truth he had come to bring to mankind is necessary to attain everlasting life and be saved, it must be available to all. This is quite different from the ancient philosophers, who taught only a small number of devotees, from whose group the multitude was excluded, and thus they bore the mark of error, for truth must be known by all since all have an equal right to possess it.

We shall speak in such a way that even the least educated may comprehend. Like the father of the family, we shall gather together our children and reveal a treasure to them. But courage and perseverance are needed to acquire it...

Come, therefore, whoever you may be, come diligently to the instructions which would deliver you from so many fatal errors and enlighten you on your only true interests. Come, especially you, the poor of Jesus Christ! Please God I may make my voice

heard in the four corners of the world to awaken so many senseless people from the fatal sloth that leads to perdition.

We shall begin by teaching you who you are, what your noble origins are, the rights you derive therefrom as well as the obligations they impose on you.

Let us ask the world. Its reply is according to the laws of prejudiced men, a foolish code that is their rule of life and according to which they judge.

Artisans, what are you in the eyes of the world? A class of people destined to toil laboriously all your lives in an obscure occupation which makes you dependent and subjects you to the whims of those from whom you must solicit employment.

Servants, what are you in the eyes of the world? A class of slaves to those who pay you, exposed to the contempt, injustice and often even ill-treatment from masters who are demanding and at times even barbarous, who believe they have bought the right to be unjust towards you with the meagre salary they pay you.

And you farmers and peasants, what are you in the eyes of the world? However useful your labours may be, you are judged

only in accordance with the strength of your arms and, if they, with distaste, take your sweat into account, it is only in so far as it makes the earth fruitful by watering it.

What about you, the poor and the needy, who are obliged by man's injustice or the harshness of fate, to beg for your pitiful subsistence, to beg as a nuisance for the bread you need to stay alive? The world considers you as the scum of society, unbearable in its sight, so much so it turns away from you lest it be moved to pity by your condition, which it does not want to ease.

This is what the world thinks. This is what you are in its eyes! Nevertheless, that is the master you have chosen. To it that you have hitherto sold your homage. What can you expect from it?... Insults and contempt, that is the reward that it gives you. It will never grant you anything else...

Come now and learn from us what you are in the eyes of faith.

You, the poor of Jesus Christ, the afflicted and wretched, the sick and suffering and covered with sores, etc., whom misery overwhelms, my brethren, my dear brethren, my dear *respectable* brethren, listen to me.

You are the children of God, the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, the co-heirs of his eternal Kingdom, the cherished portion of his inheritance; you are, in the words of Saint Peter, the holy nation, you are kings, you are priests, you are, in some way, gods: *Dii estis et filii Excelsi omnes.*

So lift up your heads; let your dejected spirit rise: stop crawling on this earth: *Dii estis et filii Excelsi omnes.* Raise yourselves towards heaven, where your most normal relationship should be: *Conversatio vestra in coelo.* For once, let your eyes pierce the rags you wear. There is within you an immortal soul, created in the image of God, whom it is destined to possess one day; a soul redeemed at the cost of the blood of Jesus Christ, more precious before God than all the riches of the world, than all the kingdoms of the earth, a soul about which he is more concerned than about the governments of the whole world.

Then, O Christians, recognize your dignity, I would say with Saint Leo; you who have been made partakers of the divine nature, etc..

(*Mss. Post. DM V 3*)

**38 — To Bishop C. A. de Richery of Fréjus,
November 12, 1823.**

« Ignorance of Christ is the worst form of poverty » (*Missionary Outlook* 1972, no. 15)

One of the basic articles of our Rules (is) conceived in these terms:

The members of this Congregation will, under the authority of the Bishops on whom they always depend, make every effort to provide spiritual aid for the poor people scattered over the countryside and for the inhabitants of rural villages, who have the greatest need of this spiritual assistance.

(*Rambert I*, 383-384)

**39 — To Mgr. Adinolfi, under-Secretary of
the S. Congregation of Bishops and
Regulars, December 23, 1825.**

Our Society works in towns, as you could notice from our Rules, and is engaged there in all sorts of good works, but its preference is to evangelize with all the zeal it can, the poor who are abandoned... I briefly recall this particular article on the ministry in which our Society is engaged so that the interest it should have for those who have a

truly Christian spirit, namely to spread knowledge of Jesus Christ and to extend his spiritual kingdom in souls, may be well understood.

(Copy. Mss. Post. DM XII 2 a)

40 — **Diary, November 23, 1838.**

Allow oneself to be evangelized by the poor.

For the third time this week, I went to administer Confirmation in our worst quarters. I always come away edified from these poor dwellings where installed misery is served by the most earnest charity. It is truly remarkable to see so many good people taking care of the sick of their quarter.

(Mss. Post.)

41 — **To Bishop Buissas of Limoges, October 7, 1847.**

In the Church there exists a small Congregation whose main purpose is to preach the Gospel to the poor and to help the most abandoned. These are the very words of the Constitutions and Rules of the Missionaries, Monseigneur, which indicate the kind of ministry you may entrust to

them. I hope that by God's mercy they will receive in your diocese, under your paternal protection, the same blessings that have constantly been theirs in the dioceses which they have never ceased to evangelize.

(*Rambert II*, 255)

42 — **Diary**, January 8, 1859.

« The poorest of my children... ». He is 77 years old. Rue de l'Echelle is the street where the beggars live.

I have just returned from confirming a sick person in rue de l'Echelle. Though I am accustomed to the warm welcome I receive everywhere when I go to minister among the poor, this time, the expression of gratitude from the people of this section was so touching and wide-spread, that I cannot help mentioning it here. They vied to see who could best prevent me from slipping. They appeared at doorways to receive my blessing. They were astonished, and expressed quite loudly their satisfaction and gratitude in seeing me visit their poor quarter. In the house of the sick woman, the closest neighbours were gathered together

to receive me, and the sick person herself was in ecstasy at seeing that a bishop had not been deterred by her miserable hut, but had come to see her. The good lady did not know that I considered myself as happy as she to be able to approach the poorest of my children in this way and fulfil the duties of my ministry towards this unfortunate class of people, who in my eyes are more interesting than the world's richest and most powerful people.

(*Rambert II, 514*)

**43 — Father Vincens, Secretary General to
Father Arnoux at Dublin, February 15,
1860.**

The work at the house of the poor is tough, but I assure you I like it very much: *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me*. We are meant for the poor; it is among them that we feel at home. We have a special grace to do a bit of good for them. I could never have imagined that the reformatory would suit us so well; here too, we find the poor and of the most unfortunate kind.

(*Copy. Registre de la correspondance, 1855-1863, Post. DM X*)

THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH (1)

44 — **To his mother**, February 28, 1809.

The number of the clergy is diminishing daily, and very soon the Church will not know to whom she should entrust the care of her children. Not being able to help this good Mother who is almost at bay would be quite cowardly. Is not this desire, so strongly felt and deeply rooted in my heart, a sure proof, in these unhappy times, of the will of him who is the supreme mover of hearts?

(*Mss. St-Martin*)

(1) Other texts on this topic may be found in the following essays:

- A. D'ADDIO, *Cristo crocifisso e la Chiesa abbandonata*, *Quaderni di Vermicino*, no. 4, 1978, 218 pp.
- M. GILBERT, *Le service de l'Eglise dans la vocation Oblate*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 15 (1956), pp. 34-39.
- E. LAMIRANDE, *Le zèle de toutes les Eglises chez Mgr de Mazenod. Son enseignement*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 19 (1960), pp. 108-116.
- P. SION, *L'amour du Fondateur pour l'Eglise*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 36 (1977), pp. 103-126; *Our Founder's love for the Church*, *Ibid.*, pp. 95 ff.

45 — **To his mother**, April 6, 1809.

She had not yet accepted Eugene's vocation.

Do you think that a man who is strongly impelled by God's Spirit to imitate the active life of Jesus Christ teaching his doctrine to people who were not at all disposed to receive him — perhaps even less disposed than people of our day, for, in spite of the miracles which accompanied his word, etc., he managed in three years of preaching to attract only a very small number of followers —; a man who coldly and objectively sees the Church's needs; and a man who, regardless of the God-given impulse to help the Church, plus other signs of God's will, is nevertheless content to remain with arms folded, and softly and secretly to bemoan these evils, without making the slightest move to shake people's hardened hearts: do you really think that such a man could enjoy any great peace of conscience?

(Mss. Post. FB 1-7)

46 — **To his mother**, October 11, 1809.

My good and dear mother, do not envy this poor Church, so horribly abandoned,

despised, trampled underfoot and which, nevertheless, has begotten all of us in Jesus Christ, because of the homage that two or three individuals in the whole of France (to which small number I consider myself fortunate to belong) wish to pay her with their freedom and lives. Why would you want me to delay some more in committing myself, in offering to the Spouse of Jesus Christ, whom this divine Master formed by the shedding of his blood, every moment of the life I have received to use for the greater glory of God?

(Mss. St-Martin)

47 — To Father Tempier, October 9, 1815.

When I shall have your reply, I will give you all the details you could wish for. But, dear friend, I conjure you, do not let yourself say no to the greatest good that may possibly be done in the Church. Vicars will easily be found to replace you but it is not so easy to come across men who are dedicated and wish to devote themselves to the glory of God and the salvation of souls with no more reward on earth than much sorrow

and all else that the Saviour announced to his true disciples.

(Rey I, 181-182)

**48 — Preface to the Constitutions and Rules,
1826.**

The Church, that glorious inheritance purchased by Christ the Saviour at the cost of his own blood, has in our days been cruelly ravaged. The beloved spouse of God's only-begotten Son is torn with anguish as she mourns the shameful defection of the children she herself bore...

Faced with such a deplorable situation, the Church earnestly appeals to the ministers whom she herself enrolled in the cause of her divine Spouse, to do all in their power, by word and example, to rekindle the flame of faith that has all but died in the hearts of so many of her children. Alas, few heed their Mother's urgent plea. Indeed, many even aggravate things by their own disgraceful conduct...

The sight of these evils has so touched the hearts of certain priests, zealous for the glory of God, men with an ardent love for

the Church, that they are willing to give their lives, if need be, for the salvation of souls.

(*Mss. Post.*)

49 — Retreat Notes, October 8, 1831.

What determined the foundation of our Congregation? Here is what we learn from our Constitutions:

*Ecclesia praeclara Christi Salvatoris haereditas... in diebus nostris saevae depredationi patuit. Haec dilecta Unigeniti Filii Dei sponsa filiorum quos peperit turpi defectio-
ne lugens terretur, etc.*

In hoc miserrimo rerum statu, Ecclesia conclamat sibi ministros, etc. Sed heu! pauci sunt qui maternam hanc instantiam non abnuant. Multi etiam Ecclesiae mala vituperabili sua agendi ratione aggravant, etc.

Is it surprising that the sight of these disorders inspired some generous reaction? There were some priests who were moved by it.

(*Mss. Post. DM IV 3*)

50 — Memoirs of Bishop de Mazenod, 1845.

So I entered the Seminary of Saint Sulpice with the desire, or rather, with the set

determination to devote myself, in the most complete way, to the Church's service, in the exercise of the ministry most useful to souls, for whose salvation I was burning to consecrate myself...

During my seminary days, I entertained the thought of making myself as useful as possible to the Church, our Mother, for whom the Lord had given me the grace always to have a filial love. The destitution in which I saw her had been one of the deciding motives for my embracing the ecclesiastical state. I had recognized this vocation from my adolescence, but could not follow it then, due to the events of the dreadful Revolution, which forced my family to transfer unexpectedly from one country to another during the entire course of our emigration, which lasted ten years in my case. After I had returned to France, I was pained to the depths of my soul in seeing the service of the altar despised ever since the Church had no more rich benefits to offer to the sacrilegious greed of more or less world famous families.

(Rambert I, 47, 161)

51 — **Excerpts from the Lenten Pastoral Letter, February 16, 1860.**

How is it possible to separate our love for Jesus Christ from that we owe to his Church? These two kinds of love merge: to love the Church is to love Jesus Christ, and vice-versa.

We love Jesus Christ in his Church because she is his immaculate spouse who came out of his opened side on the cross, just as Eve came out of the first Adam. In his Incarnation the divine Word united himself to human nature, and this union is so perfect that there is in the Man-God only one person, that of the Word. The human race, however, assumed in only one of its members, in the new Adam who is Jesus Christ, was, through the mercy of the Most High, called to participate really and as a whole in this ineffable union of divine and human natures in the Word made flesh. Jesus Christ had to associate mankind to himself mystically so as to form one whole with it while allowing the personality proper to each person united to him to subsist. And just as there is only one person in Jesus Christ, all Christians should form with him

but one body, whose head he is and whose members they are...

The Church, therefore, is the prize won by the blood of Jesus Christ, and the object of his infinite love for men. He has loved her more than his own life, and because of him she is dear to God the Father, who already from all eternity had loved her even to the point of giving his only Son for her sake: « *sic Deus dilexit mundum ut Filium suum unigenitum daret* » (Jn. 3:15). Furthermore, it is to her that the Holy Spirit, promised by the divine Saviour, inseparably united himself as her soul, to inspire her, enlighten her, guide and support her, and to work in her the mighty works of God: *Magnalia Dei* (Acts 2:11)...

All who are members of the Church live in God's spiritual house; rather, they themselves are this house which is a huge temple into which the whole world must enter and of which all stones are living stones. This temple is the vestibule and image of the eternal one. In both cases, the Spouse shows all the riches of his love upon the Bride. God himself has built this house out of divine cement.

Now, most dear brethren, we ask you: If we do not love as sons the Bride of Jesus Christ whom he wanted to give us as our Mother; if we do not love the family of the Man-God, his living habitation, his holy temple, his earthly city, image of the eternal city, his kingdom, his flock, the society he founded, in a word, the enterprise which has been the object of all his labours and delight here below: is this not the same as not wanting to love Jesus himself? Does it not amount to disregarding the designs of his mercy, the rights of his love and of his power? Is this not tantamount to dishonouring him as Saviour, as Redeemer of mankind, as conqueror over hell and death, and as the sovereign master « to whom all the nations of the earth have been given as heritage » (Ps. 2:8)?

(Printed text, pp. 5-7, 9-10)

THE POPE (1)

52 — **To Father Tempier, March 9, 1826.**

How could we not exult in gratitude to God? For our part, must we not become still more attached to our Society which has just received such convincing proof of God's protection? We now belong to our Society in a totally new way for, as it is now established in the hierarchical order, it is through it that we are united to the supreme Head of the Church, who is our supreme guide.

(*Missions 1872, 266*)

53 — **Retreat Notes, October 8, 1831.**

Thus, by observing our Rules, we obey the Church: « *Sedulo servari praecipimus* ». Consequently, he who does not observe them disobeys the Church and her Head.

(*Mss. Post. DM IV 3*)

(1) For other texts on this topic, cfr.:

— F.X. CIANCIULLI, *Mgr de Mazenod et le Pape. Sentiments romains du Fondateur*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 15 (1956), pp. 204-220.

— Y. FILIPPINI, *Hommes du Pape, une note actuelle de notre service*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 29 (1970), pp. 161-176.

54 — **To Father Mille, superior at Billens,**
February 18, 1832.

The Founder requests Father Mille to send away a postulant who was too attached to the teachings of de Laménais. The errors of « L'Avenir » were condemned by the Pope only on August 15, in the Encyclical « Mirari vos ».

In our ranks there must be enough simplicity to give up our own ideas when these are not in conformity, I do not say, with the decisions of the Holy See, but with its spirit. We do not acknowledge any other master as our teacher and we fall in line with its views even before they are dogmatically expressed.

(*Rambert I, 597*)

55 — **To the Fathers and Brothers at Billens,**
September 11, 1832.

As far as we are concerned, even before the Head of the Church speaks dogmatically by means of an apostolic constitution *ex cathedra*, his view as the teacher in the Church, which he teaches through his daily decisions on all points of morals or dogma, is the greatest and the first authority on

earth, to which we adhere with heart and in spirit, without waiting for solemn promulgations which may be delayed or even stopped due to so many circumstances. I repeat these things to you, my dear children, so that you may make this principle the normal rule of your conduct, and that you may transmit it to those who come after you, the same way as you receive it now from me.

(Rambert I, 607)

56 — To Cardinal Gousset, Archbishop of Reims, July 21, 1852.

On August 14, 1851, Bishop de Mazenod had written to Pius IX about the newspaper « La Correspondence de Rome » which had taken the liberty to lecture the French bishops. On this occasion, Cardinal Gousset had some misgivings about the Roman spirit of the Bishop of Marseilles. The latter proved in a long letter that his whole life had been in the service of the Pope. Among other things, we read therein:

According to you, I have been hostile to the teachings of Rome. My letter to the Holy Father, however, bears the most explicit witness to the contrary. I labelled the return

of minds to the Holy See a happy sign, and the resistance to it, which I pointed out then and still fear today, deplorable; I pledged my obedience to whatever it may please the Vicar of Christ to command me; I offered as guarantee of this obedience the example of my whole life as well as the lessons in this matter I have always given with so much fruit to my priests... It is painful to speak at great length about oneself, but I am not in an ordinary situation. I could repress my grief, which I will not do. As the head of a nascent Congregation to which the Lord has given an unexpected increase and whose endeavours in the four corners of the world he has blessed, I owe it to this spiritual family not to allow anything to overshadow me which could diminish the trust and protection which the Vicar of Jesus Christ has deigned to bestow on my children, whose father he has canonically made me. Since I have to defend myself, I am obliged to declare what my love for the Church of Rome has always been, to which Church, moreover, I am happy as a bishop to render testimony of my sentiments.

(Authenticated copy. Reg. des lettres administratives du diocèse de Marseille)

THE BISHOPS (1)

57 — To Bishop de Richery of Fréjus, November 12, 1823.

Monseigneur, these explanations would have proved to you that priests who make profession of the most absolute devotedness to their chief pastors, and who in everything act only in their name and under their orders, take care not to withdraw themselves from their jurisdiction. On this point, I would only have had to acquaint you with one of the basic articles of our Rules which is couched in these terms:

The members of this Congregation will, under the authority of the Bishops on whom they always depend, make every effort to provide spiritual aid for the poor people scattered over the countryside and for the inhabitants of rural villages, who have the greatest need of this spiritual assistance...

We are prepared to go to wherever they may call us; we receive our mission only

(1) For other texts, cfr. E. LAMIRANDE, *Les Oblats, hommes des évêques* in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 16 (1957), pp. 302-320.

from them, and we shall be careful not to take even the least step that is not in perfect conformity with their wishes. Thus we have conducted ourselves hitherto, and none of us has ever thought of swerving from this rule of conduct...

In fact, are not the bishops our natural guardians, our fathers and the object of our veneration and love?

Yes, Monseigneur, their will is our rule, their authority the soul of our corps, the component of all our activities; we exist only through them and for them, to work without respite, on their orders, for the salvation of the people entrusted to them, and to alleviate their preoccupations by all our zealous efforts.

(Rambert I, 383-385)

58 — To Father Teston, Vicar General of Grenoble, June 17, 1828.

We consider the bishops as our fathers from the moment they adopt us; their diocese becomes our family, and I can assure you that these adopted children can assert their affection and devotedness over anyone

else whoever it may be. Furthermore, we have the consolation of repeatedly receiving clear signs of warm preference from our Lords, the Bishops.

We are the bishop's men and we are at his disposal any time of the day or night. We must live regularly under his influence.

(*Yenveux III, 139*)

59 — To Bishop Bruillard of Grenoble, August 18, 1834.

You will find in them respect, obedience and devotedness equal to any test. They will be subject to you as to their bishop, they will love you as their father; as their protector and guide, you are assured of their trust and gratitude in advance.

They will certainly do everything possible to support your views and to please you, for they have long been trained to be subject to the bishops, whom their Institute requires them to honour in a very special manner, not *ad oculum servientes* but *propter conscientiam* (Eph. 6:6). In a word, they will be your men. Even though the internal government of their community is determined

by their Rule, even in this they are doing your will, for you desire nothing more than to see them live in perfect regularity, in accordance with what the Church has prescribed for them in approving their Constitutions.

(Rambert I, 653)

60 — To Archbishop Dupont of Avignon,
December 7, 1836.

Establishment of N.D. de Lumières.

As soon as you consider it opportune, I shall send Father Tempier, the superior of the Major Seminary of Marseilles and a member of our Congregation, to Avignon, to receive your directives; for our rule is to accept the initiatives of the diocesan bishop, who is always the first father of our missionaries in his diocese.

(Diary, January 26, 1837, Mss. Post.)

61 — To Archbishop Signay of Quebec,
August 10, 1843.

The Founder presents the Oblates. This letter was not delivered to Bishop Signay because Bishop Bourget thought that the mo-

ment for the Oblates to offer their services in Quebec had not yet arrived. The letter also manifests Bishop de Mazenod's spirit of collegiality.

More than ever, Monseigneur, I am conscious of the worth of the charity which unites us over the great distance which separates us. My children have crossed the seas to work with all the zeal of which they are capable in that part of the vineyard of the Father governed by our venerable colleagues in the episcopate of Canada. This is one more bond which unites me to the bishops for whose service I am so happy to be able to confide a small detachment of the troops I have trained for the battles of the Lord. I have learned with joy from my holy friend the bishop of Montreal, who is a father to them, that they have already done much good in his vast diocese. My whole ambition is that this good be propagated, if possible, throughout the whole of Canada which has been so sympathetic in their regard. They are essentially men of the bishops. It is with this in view that I have founded them and, thanks to God, they are all imbued with this spirit that belongs to their Institute. So were it ever convenient

to you, because of their proximity, to have recourse to their ministry, do not hesitate to avail yourself of it in keeping with the principles which guide them and of which I shall inform you if occasion arises.

(Mss. Post.)

62 — To Bishop Phelan, Coadjutor of Kingston, August, 8, 1844.

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate are eminently men of the bishops, founded only to be instruments in their hands of their own ministry for the sanctification of their flocks. The bishops have no priests more submissive, more devoted than them. So, Monseigneur, if I am to tell you my whole mind with the frankness that is well suited to a bishop, I think you were well inspired to settle the Oblates in your diocese in order to confide to them the missions and other works of zeal embraced by their Institute. I dare to vouchsafe for their devotedness and their constant cooperation in all kinds of good works that your pastoral solicitude will prompt them to undertake.

(Diary, Mss. Post.)

**63 — To Bishop M. Blanchet of Walla Walla,
January 23, 1847.**

It only remains to me, Monseigneur, to felicitate myself on being able in this circumstance to respond to your appeal. It will always truly be a happiness to me to be able to second your zeal and your solicitude. Our Congregation was established only to work for the salvation of souls. Our members are devoted to the service of the bishops and as instruments to help them fulfil their grand and sublime mission in the Church of God.

*(Mss. Archives of Archbishop's
House of Seattle)*

**64 — To Bishop Menjaud of Nancy, June 14,
1847.**

I would be happy if you could become a second father to my sons... I dare assure you, and I guarantee that you will never regret having adopted them. The spirit I instil into them and which they have perfectly understood, is that they see themselves as the bishop's men, promising him inviolable submission and affection, making his person and authority respected every-

where and by everyone, never doing anything without his approval, in a word, to be in his regard what children are towards their father.

(Yenveux III, 143)

65 — To Father Bellanger, at Blida, November 10, 1849.

I am delighted that you accompanied Bishop Pavy to Philippeville; by seeing you at close quarters he will understand still more readily that our missionaries are priests who are most devoted to the bishops and that their whole ambition lies in taking on their own shoulders some of the burden that lies so heavily on those of the Prelates... I am most anxious that the Bishop be fully aware of this since it is a basic principle of the Order.

(Yenveux III, 143)

66 — To Father Etienne Semeria, at Jaffna, March 12, 1851.

The Founder informs him that he would be appointed Coadjutor to Bishop Bettachini as soon as the latter requests it.

Do not be afraid of anything. Your

elevation to the Episcopate will not break the bonds that unite you to the Congregation, and you will always be its dear son, not only because of principles common to all, but also through the special dispositions of our Congregation, where the head and Superior General is a Bishop, the last General Chapter but one nominated another Bishop as assistant to the Superior General, and Bishops are or can be Provincials. To be a Bishop, above all in our missions, is to be head of the missionaries and their model in all the religious virtues, as well as in zeal for the salvation of souls, whom they are equally called to convert and sanctify. The important thing is never to be ambitious for this responsibility, which certainly has its frightening side, never to do anything to obtain it, but when one is called by the will of God manifested in that of one's superiors, one accepts it in simplicity, with a firm resolve never to use it for one's own personal advantage or to the detriment of religious regularity. So let us allow Divine Providence to do its work and put into its hands all the interests of the Congregation and of the mission.

(Mss. Post.)

67 — **To Bishop Gignoux of Beauvais, October 18, 1853.**

Our Oblates have been founded especially for the service of the bishops, through the ministry of preaching, for the conversion of souls, especially the most abandoned...

Our society is entirely for the service of the bishops in God's Church.

(Yenveux III, 140)

68 — **To Bishop Sergent of Quimper, August 25, 1857.**

If only you had taken the time to know me better! You would have been convinced that there is no one on earth who professes a deeper respect for the episcopacy and who better defends its prerogatives. You would have discovered that I had the honour of being raised to this dignity after I had taken a path leading away from it, and was far from thinking that later on I would be obliged to accept this burden; I told my students, in stressing the grandeur of bishops in the Church, that I would like to be their step-ladder and exalt them in the eyes

of the faithful. My greatest preoccupation has always been to instil the greatest devotedness and filial affection towards the Prelates who would call them to work in their dioceses. Once I became a bishop myself, I hardly think that this attitude, already so deeply rooted in me, diminished. My teaching remained the same. It was only through thoughtfulness that I kept in the background, insofar as I was able, in the relationship that arose between the bishops and the members of my Congregation, a Congregation God inspired me to found for the sole purpose of serving the bishops, at a time when they were in such great need of collaborators in their dioceses bereft of assistance. Would I then inspire my followers with a spirit of invasion to the detriment of the bishop's authority? That is the most terrible calumny that could be hurled against our religious family and its chief, since, as I have told you at the beginning of this letter, our Oblates are essentially bishops' men, who abide by their spirit and have no other fathers than they, who must make their sacred authority prevail in everything, and lead back to them those who disregard it either by excess or lack of principles and

are thus wanting in due respect and obedience.

(Mss. Major Sem. Quimper)

DARING AND CREATIVITY

69 — **To Father Tempier, June 18, 1832.**

Plan for an Oblate foundation in Rome.

In my last letter I told you that as much in Rome as anywhere else, we must prepare the way, if we want to succeed. This is based on the text of Saint Ignatius that in everything we must place our trust in God as if nothing could be done by men, and act as thoroughly and using all possible human means, as if God were not to be involved in the issue.

(Yenveux VII, 23)

70 — **To Father Guigues, superior at l'Osier, February 18, 1843.**

I know that I am not that fortunate to have you accept my views. I can say all I want, you persist in seeing things only from your vantage point.

According to you, the local interest which you see yourself called upon to defend, must prevail over everything else. I must not assess issues in this same way. I am not disturbed by your dissent because I am quite used to the fact that you never agree with me. In fact, while I accept that it is advantageous to supply our houses with many members, I am of the opinion that instead of letting the present opportunity of opening the doors of the three great Kingdoms to our Congregation go by, it is better to leave them to suffer for the time being, in the conviction that there is not one Society member who does not in some way want to multiply himself in order to procure this gain to the Society and to extend the sphere of the immense good it is called upon to accomplish. This is a passing effort which will be well compensated for when, very soon, these far-away countries will become self-sufficient.

Hence I would not want you to blame Father Aubert who is doing his duty intelligently and with devotedness.

(Yenveux V, 226)

71 — **To Father Honorat, March 1, 1844.**

Foundation of Bytown (Ottawa).

You certainly need to be enterprising if you are called to the conquest of souls. I was fuming at finding myself 2000 leagues from you and unable to make my voice reach you in less than two months...

This was not something tentative to be tried. You had to go there with the firm resolve to overcome all obstacles, go there to stay, take root there! How could you hesitate? What more beautiful mission than this! Ministry in the lumber camps, missions to the Savages, establishment in a city which is wholly of the future. But it is the beautiful dream coming true and you would have let it escape! The thought makes me shiver! Take all your courage in your hands once more and establish yourself there properly. Urge each one to do his duty. It is only thus you will bring upon yourselves the blessing of God.

(Yenveux I, 106)

72 — Pastoral Letter of February 7, 1847.

Charity includes everything; and in case of fresh needs, it invents new means, if necessary.

(Printed, p. 13)

73 — To Father Telmon, November 5, 1848.

In founding the house of Pittsburgh in the United States, you are laying the foundations of a new province but you must act with moderation, without prejudice, without passion, not yielding unhesitatingly to optimism but neither assuming a pessimistic attitude, a detestable disposition with which one can in no way be enterprising and can achieve no good.

(Yenveux VII, 36)

COURAGE

74 — To Father Bellon,, September 21, 1845.

Where would we be, my dear Father Bellon, if we allowed ourselves to be disheartened by the difficulties that our min-

istry brings us? This weakness is only too natural and certainly does not come from God; if we probe deeper into this feeling, we may perhaps discover something even more imperfect. And so I do not approve your worrying about it as you do. Why are you surprised to find the miseries of humanity in people? You must conquer evil with good, pray very much, always distrust yourself, but hope in God, who, precisely on this occasion, has shown you a great proof of his protection. But far from being discouraged, you ought to be full of gratitude to God, that he has enlightened us in time...

Should we also despair with regard to what happened at Lumières? Certainly not! We repair the evil, thank God for having discovered it, and continue to work with fresh zeal for the sanctification of souls, precisely because they are being attacked more violently by the enemy of every good. If we acted otherwise, we would be, I say, not only foolish but quite culpable as well.

(Yenveux V, 62)

75 — To Father Telmon, June 1, 1849.

I revert to the United States and the house at Pittsburgh. I am confident that with your resourcefulness you will surmount the serious difficulties you have encountered. It is thus that the works of God are accomplished. Only pusillanimous souls are disconcerted. When you feel that the enterprise is worthwhile and you have a divine mission to accomplish, you gather yourself together, renew your spirits, survey the difficulties and in the end, you overcome all obstacles.

(Yenveux I, suppl. 111)

**76 — To Father Casimir Aubert, in England,
December 6, 1850.**

Father Aubert is disheartened because he has to give up the Oblate properties of Penzance in order to pay the debts incurred imprudently by Father Daly. Words of comfort from the Founder.

You will have to concentrate on sustaining the morale of all your people by plenty 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 tribulations with which the demon afflicts precisely those whom he fears the most. A family which opposes hell with an apostle like our Fr. Laverlochère and so many others who follow in his footsteps must not be surprised that Satan and all his band are precipitating themselves upon her.

Be constant then and firm, with confidence in God, redouble your prayers and your fervour and this evil will be set to nought by good. We do not forget you here before the Lord.

(Rey II, 369)

**77 — To Father Casimir Aubert, in England,
December 24, 1850.**

I wish to reply to your letter of the 16th just arrived this evening. I see you are still under the effects of some form of discouragement. I wish to buoy up your soul that is excessively saddened. I am far from seeing that all is lost, as you do... At the worst, we lose our property. That is all. Is that enough to be so upset? Should relinquishing a single post mean our collapse? If we are faced with weaklings floored by the mishap

which has occurred, I shall not regret to see them go. That is no matter for surprise. We will do without them. So come, my dear, take courage. A strong soul braces itself against adversities which are nothing but tests. I fear you are too affected, this is what has made you ill...

(Rey II, 369-370)

78 — To Father J. Arnoux, in England, January 24, 1852.

Be courageous and wait until I can send you relief. Several months have quickly passed, it is only a matter of doubling one's zeal. Go back in memory to the time when we were only four, it is thus that the Congregation began and we gave a good account of ourselves. It is your turn to show yourself as generous and enterprising. One must never recoil from work, never be intimidated. The good God is there to inspire us and our good Mother to assist us. Be in horror of murmuring and dismay, this is the way to spoil everything and one no longer knows how to act. Fine wonder if an army in array gains the battle! It is best when the bravery of a few wins through. Must there only be

striving and generosity for wordly interests, for military honour and glory? When we can tell ourselves we are where obedience has put us, when we do what it bids us, we are really strong and ought to be serene and quite confident. Advance, my dear son, along this path, it is the only true one, the only sure one.

(*Yenveux V, 49*)

79 — To Father Baudrand, superior at Galveston, October 27-30, 1853.

You are going to have to work hard to help yourselves with the forces at your disposal, and for that reason it is necessary that you should have as high opinion of yourself and of your skill as I and other people have. One cannot have everything as one would wish from the very beginning; a man of spirit shows his value in difficulties, in surmounting obstacles. It is no great marvel to do well when one lacks nothing and has everything as one would wish. So take courage, for we succeed when we really want to. Meanwhile, we will work hard to form good subjects, but for the present we have in Europe no subjects at our disposal who

are suitable for work in Texas as you would like.

(*Yenveux V, 52*)

80 — **To Father Ricard in Oregon, December 1853.**

But what is dear Blanchet thinking of? How is it that the sight of such great and pressing needs does not put a little energy into his soul? We need only to will it, and with the grace of God we would overcome even greater obstacles: is this not something that we see every day in our ministry? What a pity that such a lovable child, whom I love so tenderly and for whose sanctification I would shed my blood, should sit down like this and refuse to walk forward any more. I cannot understand this way of thinking. It seems to me that it is impossible that a man, a religious, who is so good, so full of good qualities and real virtues, should not say once and for all, « I will: the grace of God will not let me down »; I press him to my heart, and bless him together with you and all our Fathers.

(*Mss. Arch. Deschâtelets, Ottawa*)

81 — **To Bishop Taché of St. Boniface, April 17, 1860.**

You more than anybody need men of good will and devotion. If nobody withdraws, the Bishop of Satala will bring you two other subjects of whom one is a priest and the other a cleric. It is no easy matter to make recruits for your country! What does one do when one comes across wretches like that Fr. Frain, who has written to ask me to recall him, as if it were merely a matter of transferring from the house at Aix to the house in Marseilles? Believe me, my dear friend, if you are not sent as many missionaries as you would like, it is because I fear that what appears to be the good will of some may be no more than a velleity which will vanish when it is too late to do anything about it. Who would have said that about Fr. Frain, or about Fr. Mestre who, I have heard, is giving you trouble from time to time? What we need is men like the excellent Mgr Grandin. There is a real missionary! What a good idea of ours it was to choose him to be your Coadjutor! He by himself is worth ten missionaries.

(Mss. Post.)

HUMILITY

82 — To Father Marcou, January 27, 1824.

My good Marchetto, I embrace you very tenderly and rejoice to see you performing so zealously your holy ministry. It seems to me, in telling you that, that you are present and that I press you against my heart. Be humble and you will do much good; you know that it is to the humble that the Lord *dat gratiam*. The cleverest amongst us and amongst all men is nothing by himself but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, it is the good God who does all and to whom alone all should be attributed; of that we must all be persuaded.

(*Yenveux V, 134*)

83 — To Father Mille, superior of N.D. du Laus, May 21, 1836.

A virtuous religious must understand that all must humbly accept (the remarks) and even reprimands of their superiors. It is rather strange that you feel obliged to be so cautious for fear of going against the tastes, ideas, and should I say, often the weird notions of your men. You have to

manage their self-love so as not to sadden or discourage them. What kind of virtue is this? A bit more humility, a better idea of disinterestedness so often recommended, being satisfied with anything and living happily under the gentle guidance of obedience are the sure means of arriving at the practice of the essential elements of the religious life. This must be inculcated in the novitiate, and let us nowhere deviate from it.

(Yenveux III, 64)

84 — **Diary**, May 17, 1837.

Ah! how much our dear Father Telmon needs to work on his temperament and imagination! Nevertheless I must admit that I was pleased with the way he took my remarks and even my reprimands. It is true that I spoke to him with a lot of kindness and discretion, without however concealing the truth from him. It is dangerous for a young man who is not sufficiently grounded in virtue, to be so successful in everything he does, and thus become the object of everyone's admiration. Selfishness and pride creep into him and he becomes blind to his defects. The reprimands of superiors who

notice these defects then become unbearable, because they are considered unjust and the result of a jealous prejudice. Respect and obedience are soon jeopardized, murmurs, complaints and more enter the picture, and a person can go far like this. This is exactly what happened to Father Telmon. He was fully successful in everything at Corsica, and everyone vied to praise him. It has come to the point that the Bishop happened to tell me the other day that Father Telmon was necessary for the diocese and that there would be a general upheaval were I to recall him. Father Telmon needs much more virtue than he now possesses to resist such enticements. He has suffered the consequences thereof and I pray God he will realize them and remedy them in time.

(*Mss. Post.*)

**85 — To Father Dassy, at N.D. de l'Osier,
July 17, 1841.**

I never cease thanking God for the good accomplished through your ministry. As for you, my child, and your companions, ever keep in your heart and on your lips these beautiful words of the Apostle: *Servi inutiles*

sumus: quod debuimus facere fecimus (Lk. 17:10). Who are we, in fact, to perform miracles? What should surprise us is that we do not spoil the mission God has entrusted to us, by our infidelities and what we substitute from ourselves. Let us humble ourselves in our own eyes, and be careful not to ask anything from the people. We do not want their praises, admiration, etc., any more than their money. Especially you, my good son, you need to be on your guard because the public spoils you on account of your good qualities, zeal and everything else that strikes them about you.

(*Mss. Post.*)

86 — **To Father C. Baret, at N.D. de Cléry,**
June 22, 1854.

It is not forbidden to take advantage of the means God places at our disposal, in favour of the work he has entrusted to us in his goodness. That is all in order, and I have no scruples about it even though I am the last person to count on purely natural means. My whole trust is in God and that is one more reason to make use of his gifts.

Having done that, each one should examine himself and take care not to attribute to himself anything that he has received. All the glory must go to its source, *solī Deo honor et gloria*.

(*Mss. Post.*)

CONFIDENCE

87 — **To Father Tempier, from Rome, December 28, 1825.**

I am at present quietly getting ready for further operations; for one must remember the saying of St. Ignatius that in affairs one must act as if success depended on our skill and to put in God all our confidence as if all our efforts could produce nothing. I admit nonetheless that after all that has happened up to now, I count only on the help of God and if I do my part, it is to observe formalities and not seem to tempt God. I have nothing more to tell you. I will have to leave you time to meditate a little on the ways of Providence and to thank God.

(*Missions 1872, 203*)

88 — To Father Tempier, from Rome, January 20, 1826.

My dear friend, let us keep on praying, let us never waver in trusting God completely. It is He alone who has the right to decide and arrange all things, according to His infinite wisdom, and for the greatest glory of His holy name. I confess that, never in my life have I understood as I do now, what it means to leave one's self entirely in God's hands. In no other circumstances have I ever felt so strongly urged to practise this virtue, for it is a virtue, and the true Christian should never cease to nourish it in his soul. How glad I am that I have done my best to accustom myself to the practice of this virtue. But this holy abandonment does not forbid earnest prayer for something that one believes to be good; on the contrary, it leads one to pray with greater confidence, with a kind of certainty that one's prayers will be heard.

(Missions 1872, 226)

89 — Diary, November 12, 1838.

Honorat's letter. He sends me an account of the beginnings of the mission at

Aubignan. These are real missionaries! There is a notable difference between this letter and what Father Courtès has written from Rognes where he is giving a mission at the same time. Father Honorat's letter is a source of consolation and joy, it is as though we can see the marvels of grace. It is everything we witnessed through our ministry when we ourselves had the pleasure of preaching missions. Father Courtès' letter is icy. He is a preacher who has a large audience of indifferent people, and he is not confident of their conversion. Honorat does not doubt that the entire population of Aubignan, consisting of 1800 people will profit, without any exception, from the mission. Courtès does not count on anything from anyone. Honorat is satisfied with all his co-workers. Courtès complains about all his companions. The secret of this contrast is that Honorat... is full of trust in God's assistance, he is accustomed to seeing miracles happen; and Courtès, who does not have this attitude, relies only on the human means at his disposal. Who, however, is more talented than he?

(Mss. Post.)

90 — **To Father Guigues, Visitor extra-ordinary to Canada, December 5, 1844.**

You can well believe my heart bleeds when I hear you speak of all the good that is in prospect and which you cannot undertake because of lack of personnel. Our Congregation is not like the Jesuits who proliferate and who hardly know what to do with their members. We are a very small family which has exhausted itself by pitching its tents in America. Everything languishes in Europe and I am accused daily of having been too generous in making sacrifices so great in number and quality. I am not inclined to repent of this although I feel our penury to the quick. But it would be useless for you to count on my being able to furnish people other than the one I have just spoken to you about. All the others are too young and still in need of training. Providence will come to our help where you are. We need to have courage and confidence in God who shows us the road and will not abandon us... Everywhere we have established ourselves we have made a feeble start. The time has not yet come to do otherwise. So, I repeat, without hesitation, respond to

the wish of the Bishop of Juliopolis and begin this work even with only two Oblates while awaiting others from the goodness of God.

(Yenveux VII, 37)

91 — To Father Léonard, June 17, 1847.

Well then, it has indeed been the will of God that our Father Guigues should be the bishop of Bytown. He will remain Provincial and nothing will change in his position with regard to the members and the houses of the Congregation. I can well understand the inconveniences, but how can we not also see the advantages of this arrangement of Providence? God's will has been manifested here as always, and who are we to oppose it? In addition to the fact that our efforts would have been powerless, is this how we should act? If I am to take Father Allard as interpreting their mind well, I think that our Fathers in Canada are pushing their fear too far and are totally lacking trust in God. They have annoyed me unnecessarily regarding this matter. I implore you, if you are in a position to write to them, reassure them

and lead them to submit themselves to God's will and to trust in his goodness...

Let us see in all this, and I repeat it, a plan of divine Providence and let us have sufficient confidence in its goodness towards us so as to be convinced that God would never permit anything detrimental to our work, which is really his.

(Yenveux IX, 134)

92 — To Father Vincens, Novice Master at l'Osier, August 12, 1847.

At the culmination of Father Léonard's recruiting campaign, and after accepting the « wonderful mission » of Ceylon.

My dear Father Vincens, there is no doubt we have reason to be alarmed when we consider the enormous tasks incumbent on us. But who would dare to limit God's merciful designs? His will is too clearly manifest, we cannot but follow it with blind confidence.

It is at a time when he is calling our Congregation to extend its zeal over an immense range of countries that he is at the same time inspiring a large number of men

to offer themselves for the accomplishment of his designs. And we would refuse to accept their devotedness, the very thing which enables us to obey our Master's will? No, I cannot accept that, despite what human prudence may dictate. So welcome everyone whom the Lord sends us. This in no way means that you have to accept them without testing them. On the contrary, be diligent in discerning well the motives which bring them, in evaluating their virtues and in judging whether they have sufficient talent.

(*Mss. Post.*)

93 — **To Father Végreville, at Ile à la Crosse,**
April 17, 1860.

Never allow yourself to be crushed by the difficulties and the sufferings that are inseparable from our life here below, whatever the position in which Providence has placed us. Wisdom consists in taking advantage of everything for our sanctification. When we love God, everything that happens enriches our souls with merits. *Diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum* (Rom. 8:28) I have such a high view of your voca-

tion that I cannot bear the thought of the tiniest imperfection and it troubles me as if it were a serious infidelity. Every day I pray that his grace will keep you all in great holiness. I cannot think in other terms of the life of sublime devotion which is the life of our missionaries.

(Mss. Post.)

PRUDENCE

94 — **To Father Mye, June 19, 1825.**

I find that this retreat in the prisons has been accepted somewhat lightly. One would need to be in a position to make it succeed. Did you not see that you are risking that those who will come after will take it upon themselves to redo your work if, having undertaken it without sufficient means to succeed, grace only cooperated sparingly... For the rest, arrange everything for the best; but in this, as in all decisions that you will be called to make, weigh in the scale not only the good which is apt to be done, but the manner in which it is possible to do it and our situation.

According to the principles which it is essential that we must hold, precisely in order to assure a good that will last, I do not hesitate to think that you would do badly by consenting to collaborate with the pastoral retreat which has been mentioned to you.

(Yenveux I, 102-103)

95 — To Father Courtès, January 23, 1839.

For God's sake, do not exhaust yourself. How can you do the mission in Rognes if you kill yourself at Istres? You must look after one another. I get the impression that you are doing nothing of the sort. You are taking a great responsibility upon yourself. From here, I can only remind you of your duty. Zeal has merit only when it is moderated by prudence.

(Mss. Post.)

96 — To Father E. Semeria, in Ceylon, January 25, 1848.

Prudential advice to Father Semeria, who was surrounded by rivalries and intrigues.

Let this lead you always to observe a just and prudent reserve. I would be glad

if you would observe such prudence to the extent of never giving yourself to the other missionaries whom you have found and who have given you a warm welcome. Be polite to them, even friendly, but in important matters never share any confidences with them about anything. You know how easy it is to give a wrong interpretation even to the best intentions. I know for sure that you and your companions went to Ceylon from no motive other than obedience and a desire to work in conformity with your vocation for the salvation of souls, but the same is by no means proven in the case of free priests who may have looked at their mission from another point of view. This being the case, those priests may have been thoroughly upset by your arrival, although they have welcomed you, especially if they have any suspicion that you might come to inspire so much confidence that you will overtake them in any ambitions that may have arisen in them when they saw a simple priest like themselves become Vicar Apostolic. It is reasonable to suppose that they are not entirely without hope of succeeding him should a change come about, and that they are taking steps in consequence. I am

speaking to you humanly. Perhaps this is not the case, but my experience of men obliges me to warn you in advance of any surprise and to illuminate your natural goodness for fear that it might allow itself to be deceived by appearances into believing men to be better than they are. I greatly love the simplicity of the dove, but I never like it to be separated from the prudence of the serpent.

(Mss. Post.)

97 — To Bishop E. Semeria, Vicar Apostolic of Jaffna, October 10, 1857.

Let us turn to you, my very dear friend, now that you have become, by the death of Bishop Bettachini, Vicar Apostolic of Jaffna. This is a situation which we had foreseen, given the sad state of health of this poor prelate. All I ask of you is that you do not feel obliged to do more than your strength allows. You have to look after both yourself and your missionaries. If something is going badly it will not be your fault. When you have more workers you will be able to do more. In the present state of things you have to work according to your strength.

Start from the principle that you are not obliged to do more than one can reasonably expect a man to do.

(*Mss. Post.*)

MARY IMMACULATE (1)

98 — To Father Tempier, August 15, 1822.

After solemnly blessing the statue of the Immaculate Virgin, in the chapel of the Mission, at Aix (2).

(1) Many essays treat this topic and reproduce texts, cfr. especially:

- M. GIRoux, *Our Founder's devotion to Mary Immaculate. Manifestations from his writings up to 1841*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 3 (1944), pp. 272-286.
- J. CROTEAU, R. GAUTHIER, F. JETTE, *Essai sur le caractère marial de notre spiritualité*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 7 (1948), pp. 13-45, 168-195, 237-262, etc.
- R. GUINDON, *Le caractère marial de la formation cléricale chez les Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 14 (1955), pp. 133-147.
- E. LAMIRANDE, *Note sur l'orientation profonde de la dévotion mariale de notre vénéré Fondateur*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 16 (1957), pp. 66-70.

(2) At present, this statue is in the chapel of the General House.

The ceremony has just finished, very dear and most good brother, silence reigns in the house. It is broken only by the sound of a distant bell which announces the departure of the great procession. Satiated with the sincere tributes that we have just rendered to our good Mother, at the feet of the beautiful statue that we have installed as a souvenir of her in our church, I am letting the others take care of honouring her with the external pomp of a parade which would add nothing further to my perhaps over-demanding piety. Let this interlude be used to converse with you, dear friend, in sweet outpouring of the heart. Would that I could share with you all that I experienced in the way of consolation on this beautiful day devoted to Mary our Queen!

I had not felt for a long time as much joy in speaking of her grandeur and in encouraging our Christians to put all their confidence in her, as during my instruction to the Sodality this morning. I can safely hope I was understood and I can well believe that all the faithful who came to our church this evening shared the fervour with which I was inspired at the sight of the statue of the Holy Virgin and greater still by the graces.

which she obtained from her divine Son, I dare say, while we were invoking her with so much affection, because she is our Mother. I believe I owe to her also a special experience that I felt today, I will not go so far as to say more than ever, but certainly more than usual. I cannot describe it too well because it comprised several things but all related, however, to a single object, our dear Society. It seemed to me that what I saw, what I could put my finger on, was that within her lies hidden the germ of very great virtues, and that she can achieve infinite good; I found her worthy, everything pleased me about her, I cherished her rules, her statutes; her ministry seemed sublime to me, as it is indeed. I found in her bosom sure means of salvation, even infallible, such is how they looked to me (3).

(*Rey I, 483*)

(3) The Founder then presents to his confidant his own imperfections and the obstacles which he sees « as arrayed in battle », but his trust in « our good Mother » was not in vain, and the obstacles would be overcome. This refers especially to the appointment of his uncle to the diocese of Marseilles, and three years later, to the papal approbation accorded to the small Congregation, under the title of Mary Immaculate.

99 — To Father Tempier, December 22-24, 1825.

After the audience of December 20 and the favourable reply of the Pope.

Let us renew ourselves especially in devotion to the most holy Virgin and render ourselves worthy to be Oblates of the Immaculate Mary. But this is a passport to heaven! How have we not thought of it sooner? Avow that it will be as glorious as it will be consoling for us to be consecrated to her in a special manner and to bear her name. The Oblates of Mary! This name satisfies the heart and the ear.

(Missions 1872, 201-202)

100 — To Father Tempier, March 20, 1826 (1).

May we really understand who and what we are! I hope the Lord will grant us this grace with the help and by the protection of our holy Mother, Mary Immaculate. In

(1) This is the first letter in which the heading includes the « et M.I. » (*et Maria Immaculata*) currently used in the Congregation, the complement to what until then was the « L.J.C. » (*Laudetur Jesus Christus*).

our Congregation, we must have great devotion to her. Does it not seem to you a mark of predestination, to bear the name of Oblate of Mary, that is to say, consecrated to God under the patronage of Mary, whose name the Congregation bears like a family name it has in common with the most holy and immaculate Mother of God? This would make anyone jealous!

The Church herself has given us this beautiful title, and we accept it with reverence, love and gratitude. We are proud of our dignity and of the rights it gives us to the protection of her who is the All-Powerful with God.

(Missions 1872, 277)

101 — **To Bishop Arbaud of Gap, March 10, 1828.**

All of us profess a very special devotion to the Mother of God. The Church has laid on us a duty — pleasing, to be sure, but a duty nonetheless — of spreading devotion to her: « We firmly hope that the members of this holy Family, who are employed in the ministry of the word of God under Rules so

well fitted to form hearts to piety, and who claim as their patroness, the Virgin Mother of God conceived without sin, will strive with all their strength and especially by their example, to bring back to the bosom of the Mother of Mercy those men, whom Jesus Christ on his Cross willed to give her as her sons ». These are the words of the Decree (of approbation of Leo XII).

(Registre de N.D. du Laus, 270)

102 — Act of Visitation of the house of N.D. de l'Osier, July 16, 1835.

On our arrival at Notre-Dame de l'Osier to make a visitation of the new establishment that divine Providence has entrusted to our Congregation, our first concern was to thank the Lord for the remarkable favour he was pleased to bestow on us in calling us to this shrine to restore the cult of the Most Holy Virgin, and to draw from the bosom of this good Mother the graces needed by the members of our Institute to accomplish worthily the apostolic ministry they are to do in these regions.

It did not take us much time to realize that only traces remain of the devotion to

Mary that existed in this holy place during the past century. How could it be otherwise after forty years of revolution and the consequent abandonment of this shrine?

The Blessed Virgin never ceased to show the effects of her power to those who invoked her with confidence during this time. Through indifference, however, there no longer was any understanding of the obligation resulting from these remarkable favours of God's Mother, who above all wants the glory of her divine Son and the conversion of the souls he has redeemed with his precious blood...

The Bishop of Grenoble, no doubt equally convinced that the means he has applied up to the present were an insufficient response to the manifestly evident design of God's will, has in the end decided to invite our Congregation which is specially commissioned by the Church to spread devotion to Mary and by explicit vocation is dedicated to the conversion of souls, to labour efficaciously towards restoring devotion to Notre-Dame de l'Osier to its original state and, at the same time, to engage a certain number of its members in the holy ministry of missions in the diocese.

In this way the Congregation is established at l'Osier in perfect accordance with the spirit of its Institute to preach the Gospel to the most abandoned souls of this vast diocese, and to contribute in whatever way it can, to increasing the glory of the Blessed Virgin by giving a better impetus to the devotion of the faithful towards this good Mother of all Christians, our well-beloved Patroness.

(Copy Post. DM IX 4)

**103 — Act of Visitation of the house of N.D.
du Laus, October 18, 1835.**

We cannot but be overjoyed on considering the progress made by the people in piety and devotion to the most holy Virgin since our Congregation has had the honour of serving this shrine. This fact impresses everyone. If necessary, we could mention the testimony of the parish priest of Chorges who has lived continuously at Laus from prior to our taking possession of it, as well as of many others, who refer to it daily. All of them rightly attribute it to the care the Congregation has taken to fulfil its mission in this blessed locality. Hence, an ever-

increasing crowd of faithful run to the feet of our good Mother, assured that they will meet on the steps of the earthly throne of Heaven's Queen, zealous ministers of her divine Son, specially entrusted with reconciling sinners, for whom this Mother of mercy asks for pardon and peace through her powerful protection. Hence too, a renewed fervour among so many pious people who are daily attracted to this shrine by Mary's inviting appeal, the brilliance of the marvels she unceasingly works, and — this too must be said — the good example they expect from the presence of a regular community.

Surely this is an enchanting spectacle! When we consider that the Lord in this single place presents our Congregation with the means powerfully to achieve all the ends of its Institute — for also from here our missionaries go forth to evangelize all the people of the environs and even farther afield, and this family centre is definitely one of the most famous shrines of our holy Mother and Patron — we have ample reason to be swept away by consoling happiness, or, better still, ample reason to abase ourselves before God in our impotence fully to

appreciate such a gift, such evident protection.

(Copy Post. DM IX 4)

104 — **To Archbishop Celestine Dupont of Avignon, December 7, 1836.**

Monseigneur, today I have met Father Gilles of the house at Aiguebelle. This religious proposed that I buy the convent and the church of Notre-Dame de Lumières as a future establishment for missionaries. I told him I would gladly agree to his plans if they were in accord with the views of Your Excellency. The project pleased me all the more because our missionaries have been specially called to work in the Southern dioceses whose language they know and, placed by the Holy See under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, they have a special predilection to establish themselves in shrines that are dedicated to her. Thus, by disposition of divine Providence, they already serve several such shrines where they have happily succeeded in making hitherto neglected devotion flourish again.

(Diary, January 26, 1837, Post.)

105 — **Letter of Obedience to Father Honorat and the first missionaries to Canada, September 20, 1841.**

May the Blessed Virgin conceived without stain be your guide and patroness, devotion to whom, you must bear in mind, is a special duty of our vocation to propagate in every place.

(Latin Mss. Ottawa, Arch. Deschâtelets)

106 — **To Father Dandurand, February 1843.**

When (your letter) was delivered to me, your consecration to God had already taken place and you were decidedly one of us, that is, you had become member of a body which has Mary for Mother and which, under her patronage, wherever her members are to be found, wages the battles of the Lord to destroy the empire of the demon and spread with all its might the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

(Mss. O.M.I. Arch. Winnipeg)

107 — **Pastoral Letter of July 8, 1849.**

Introducing the Encyclical of Pius IX on the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin.

After that which directly concerns God, nothing is more precious for truly enlightened piety than that which concerns the honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Here we meet all that exists in a son towards his mother. And what a Mother! She has given us him who is the world's life and salvation, she has engendered all of us spiritually at the foot of the Cross through the pangs of the passion and death of the God-Man, the blessed fruit of her womb; she is rightly called the new Eve and the co-redemptrix of the human race.

Her tenderness watches over us. She nourishes our souls with divine favours which, as the holy Fathers say, she dispenses. From heaven above she distributes them generously to her children, after having drawn them for their sake from the heart of her divine Son, our Saviour. Even our earthly existence is under the protection of her maternal love; and the Angels, who forever praise and always obey her as their Queen, are sent from her throne to guide us on our way (Ps. 91:11)...

God's own glory is enhanced by Mary's. Everything that tends to glorify the Blessed Virgin on our part, relays from her to God,

acquiring so to speak, in the hands of the most perfect of creatures, the character of the most perfect homage towards the Creator. Yes, we thus glorify God in the masterpiece of his power and glory; we praise him because among all the marvels of power that prove his infinite greatness, he has produced someone who sums up in herself alone, better than all other persons put together, his adorable perfections. Furthermore, the greatness of the Blessed Virgin consists especially in her dignity as Mother of God. This is the reason for all the prerogatives with which she is endowed and for the superior cult we pay her.

Thus it is the Son whom we honour in the person of the Mother and this is why, in our homage to Mary, it is impossible to overstep the limit, provided we consider her a creature, because God then always remains the supreme end of all this homage.

(Printed text, p. 4)

108 — **Bishop de Mazenod's will**, August 1, 1854 (His 72nd. birthday).

I impore God's mercy, through the merits of our divine Saviour Jesus Christ in

whom I place my trust, to obtain forgiveness of my sins and the grace to welcome my soul into his holy Paradise.

To this end, I invoke the intercession of the Most Holy and Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God, daring to remind her in all humility, but with consolation, of the filial devotion of my whole life and of the desire I have always had to make her known and loved, and to spread her devotion everywhere through the ministry of those whom the Church has given to me as children, who have had the same desire as myself.

(Copy Mss. Post., DM XVI 1)

109 — Pastoral Letter of December 21, 1859.

On the occasion of inaugurating the solemn and perpetual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the diocese of Marseilles.

Mary's power of intercession and maternal love are acclaimed everywhere, and in our day devotion to her has increased to a wonderful extent. It is in the highest honour as it was in times of great faith. We bless the Lord for this. This multiple homage honouring the Mother of God marks a period of renewal in faith. From Mary, it

reaches her divine Son, since is so greatly honoured only because she is the Mother of Jesus Christ. Mary's name is invoked with so much of confidence, that she may intercede for us with her divine Son, who is thereby acknowledged as the author of all grace. We never give too much honour to the Blessed Virgin, provided devotion to her is understood and practised in the limited sense of what is due to a creature, however great and sublime she may be. We must be careful however, lest we pay to ordinary images of God's Mother a veneration whose external signs seem to obscure those required by the presence of Jesus Christ. On the contrary, the devotion which our faith and love addresses to the adorable Eucharist, must, in proportion to our humble means, be far superior to what we generally entertain and have for Mary Immaculate.

(Printed text, p. 10)

III. THE CONGREGATION'S APOSTOLIC WORKS

ACTIVITIES (1)

110 — **Petition to Pope Leo XII, December 8, 1825.**

The Founder lists the activities of the Society's missionaries.

They have devoted themselves mainly to the missions, which is the principal end of

(1) Several articles in *Etudes Oblates* have developed this topic and quote texts of the Founder. cfr. especially:

- E. LAMIRANDE, *Saisir tout le bien qu'on nous propose. Introduction à une étude sur quelques ministères de la Congregation*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 22 (1963), pp. 428-440.
- *Idem.* (Sur les divers ministères). *Etudes Oblates*, t. 18 (1959), pp. 105-126; t. 21 (1962), pp. 41-56; t. 23 (1964), pp. 273-290; t. 24 (1965), pp. 368-385; t. 24 (1965), pp. 3-29.

their Institute, and this preferably in the most abandoned areas, preaching there in the vernacular, that is in the dialect, the daily language of the people who do not understand French well in these remote places. They have offered their assistance to the Clergy in view of a moral reform by means of retreats and a good priestly training in seminaries. They have dedicated themselves to the care of the youth whom they gather into Christian groups in order to withdraw them from the world's corruption. They have also been engaged in serving poor prisoners whom they instruct, to whom they administer the Sacraments and those who are condemned to death they accompany even to the gallows.

(Missions O.M.I., 1952, 58)

**111 — Act establishing the community of
N.D. de Lumières, June 2, 1837.**

This very day and by these letters, we have appointed and appoint the above mentioned Reverend Father Honorat as the superior of the new community which we establish as the guardian of the famous shrine

of Notre-Dame de Lumières. This community will serve our good Mother devoutly in this holy place and work unceasingly to spread devotion to her, to make her known and loved by all who are led to this shrine by curiosity or devotion.

Our priests will also be specially entrusted with evangelizing the parishes of the diocese of Avignon by preaching missions and retreats, as it may please His Grace the Archbishop to assign them in response to the requests of the parish priests.

They will live in our house of Notre-Dame de Lumières in conformity with our holy Rules, spending their time in prayer, study and the spiritual service of pilgrims who come in great numbers to honour the Blessed Virgin in her miraculous shrine.

They will be zealously and readily available to direct ecclesiastics in spiritual exercises, and even lay people who may be inclined to come and make retreats in our house.

We confidently hope that the behaviour of our Fathers and the good repute of their virtues will soon be a source of edification and good example to the faithful and priests

of the neighbouring districts and of the entire diocese.

(Excerpts from the Book of the annual visitation of the house of N.D. de Lumières)

112 — **To Father Courtès**, September 19, 1837.

I am leaving for a Confirmation service at Saint-André. Before boarding, I hasten to tell you I am very pleased to learn that you are hoping to be finally freed of the hospital. This should be achieved at any cost because there is too great a disadvantage in going against the over-all attitude of a Society. I am more than convinced that our Fathers submit themselves to this need only out of their personal respect for me. No other superior would have managed it. Henceforth we must do everything we can to rid ourselves of any burden that is unbearable to everyone. We cannot pretend that this ministry belongs among the activities of our Congregation. On the contrary, the isolation of the person who is assigned to it makes it formally opposed to the spirit and letter of our Rules. Hence we must ap-

ply all our skill to ease our members' spirit even more than their body; it is useless deluding ourselves that we can persuade them.

(Yenveux II, 35)

113 — **To Father Courtès**, September 23, 1837.

Regarding the question of the boarding school, when His Grace the Archbishop proposed that you take charge of it, you should have told him in all simplicity that it is against our Rules to take on the regular direction of a community of persons of the opposite sex; that we could go there from time to time to give some instructions, if His Grace the Archbishop wished; but that it is preferable not to overburden your small community with new activities which divert its members from the principal end of the Institute, which is preaching missions. We must be logical; we withdrew from the boarding school of Sacré-Coeur because we are supposed to provide this service only for the time-being to oblige them and as an exception. Now they request a similar service, with no conditions and for less serious

reasons. However, I feel that you have gone too far in having refused His Grace the Archbishop everything. If he insists that you take up the direction of this house whose protector he is, then after informing him that it is against your Rules and that you could accept it only with a dispensation, as an interim measure until he finds someone suitable, you may give instructions to them, even confess them, but you may not bind yourself to saying *Mas* for them or to serve their chapel.

(*Yenveux II*, 34)

114 — **To Father Dassy**, March 29, 1842.

He was interesting himself in archeology and had been appointed the correspondent to a Paris periodical of history.

I see that I have to return to the same point again. This time, it is about something that is already a fact. You have already been appointed correspondent etc.. Do not think, my dear child, that I am happy about this honour or that I consider this could bring the least glory or advantage to the Congregation. I say even more: if I did not know as I do your activities and your capacity for work, I would consider this incident as

something unfortunate, for you would have turned away from your principal ministry, from that which is essentially proper to your vocation and which you could not neglect without lacking in your duties and offending God. So I have come to the conclusion that if you feel you could combine the duties of your new job with those of your vocation, that the research, which you may be able to make, serves rather as relaxation than as activity incompatible with the missions, retreats and studies required by this ministry, then I authorize you to respond to the trust that has been placed in you. But note well, my dear child, that it is your duty first of all to sanctify yourself by advancing in perfection. You will be devoting yourself ardently to archeological studies which demand lectures, meetings and plenty of time. Weigh all these on the scales of the priesthood and reflect on the *quid prodest*, etc..

(*Ms. Post.*)

**115 — To Father Casimir Aubert, Visitor to
England, January 19, 1850.**

I had thought it was understood that you were to establish yourselves in the big city

of Manchester, just as you were proposing to do at Liverpool. I am most concerned that you be able to establish yourselves in big cities where there is so much good to do though you must be in a place of your own. So many other Congregations have come across benefactors that we would indeed be unfortunate if we were^d not able to find a worthy benefactor who could effectively aid us to settle precisely where we have the most good to do.

(Yenveux VII, 46)

116 — To Bishop Guigues, in Canada, June 2, 1855.

When the ever-growing prosperity of your clergy allows you to send the Oblates back to their central house at Bytown, they will be able to devote themselves more particularly to missions, continue to have sole responsibility for the docks, and later on to provide a colony to promote the project you mention of settling them in a house in the direction of Hudson Bay to make their ministry more useful to the Indians whom they evangelise.

(Copy. Reg. lettres 1855-1863. Post.)

**117 — Letter to the Propagation of the Faith
at Lyon, December 30, 1857.**

With regard to Buffalo, Gentlemen, I feel it necessary to inform you on the present condition of our Fathers in that city and the change which occurred not long ago. According to our agreement with Bishop Timon it was supposed to be both a college-seminary and a mission house. That is why, at the very beginning, they purchased a rather large plot of land in order to construct a building for that purpose, and to which a public chapel was to be added for the religious services for the residents in that part of the city. However, a few year's experience has sufficed to show that this college-seminary would never be more than a training school where, only with difficulty, would it be possible to gather together a small number of seminarians. Most of them would have to work as supervisors or professors and that would very much jeopardize their ecclesiastical education. Compelled, therefore, to give up the idea of making their foundation a house of education, our fathers dedicated it exclusively to a purpose more in conformity with the spirit of their vocation, which is

the apostolic ministry. They have devoted themselves to the religious service of the district in which they live, and for part of the year visit the parishes of the diocese to preach missions and retreats to the immense satisfaction of the clergy and the great advantage of the people whom these exercises have restored to fidelity in their religious duties or brought back to the Church since most of them are separated brethren. (The same applies in Texas...)

Insofar as it is not at all in conformity with the vocation of our missionaries to undertake similar works, since the Congregation assumes the education of youth only in seminaries where the goal is priestly formation, we had to try and place our Fathers in Galveston in conditions closer to the spirit of their state of life. After having an agreement with Bishop Odin in this matter, the Fathers went to Brownsville to join their confreres and help them provide for the spiritual care of the population of that city and the vast district for which it acts as a center.

(Mss. Paris, Arch. Propagation de la foi)

118 — **To Father Vincens, May 12, 1859.**

The difficulty lies in training the elite personnel needed to carry out our mission in Paris. You will really have to struggle with that. We need Rule-abiding men who are edifying, fit to direct religious communities and capable of distinguishing themselves in the pulpits of Paris. I do not see this last item as indispensable, however. My, what a job we have taken on! If there is anything inane and useless for the salvation of souls, it is these isolated Paris sermons. If you were speaking to me of instructions to be given in the outskirts which are in such great need of conversion, I would understand it.

(Yenveux VII, 60)

PREACHING (1)

**119 — Popular Instruction on Confession
preached in Provençal on the 4th.
Sunday of Lent, 1813.**

(1) For other texts, cfr.:

— E. LAMIRANDE, *L'annonce de la parole de Dieu*

We had placed all our trust in the Lord and our hope has not been in vain: experience proves that the sacred word transmitted through our ministry is being eagerly received. For this may God be praised! My brethren, the joy I experience is so great that I cannot express it to you... Called by vocation to be the servant and the priest of the poor, in whose service I want to be able to spend my whole life, I could not be insensitive seeing the poor people's eagerness to hear me... Imitating the Apostle, we did not come to proclaim to you the Gospel of Jesus Christ through high-sounding speeches of a human wisdom, no, « in speaking and in preaching to you we used not persuasive speech of human wisdom, but the simple word of God devoid of all embellishment, offered as much as we could, within the reach of the most simple people ».

(*Mss. Post.*)

selon Mgr de Mazenod. Le ministère évangélique de la Congregation, in Etudes Oblates, t, 18 (1959), pp. 105-126.

— *Idem., Les dérogations aux règles générales dans la prédication des Oblats au temps du Fondateur, in Etudes Oblates, t. 24 (1965), pp. 368-385.*

120 — **To Father Mye**, September 19, 1825.

I have noted with exquisite consolation that all good people and especially those who walk with simplicity before God are very attached to their missionaries. It matters little that certain conceited persons wish their ears to be charmed with profane sounds; that is what I call those discourses which please but do not convert. Hold fast to our method which is drawn from truth and which the good God deigns to sanction with his grace.

(*Yenveux II*, 70)

121 — **To Father Courtès**, July 22, 1826.

That making the Jubilee of Aix was considered so important made me groan plenty. If, instead of this display, we had evangelized the poor, really abandoned people, God would have been glorified and we filled with blessings and consolations, not the disappointments we have experienced. I am not at all tempted to consent to your starting all over again. People can say what they will, I scoff at this and urge you to scoff at it as much as I do...

(*Yenveux I*, 93)

122 — **To Father Suzanne**, August 22, 1827.

Even if the book you have undertaken to publish turned out as perfectly as you hope, it will be read by very few persons, if, as we are supposing, some printer accepted to print it at all. And so, how many will it lead to the truth? Very few, very very few, practically no one. Everything has already been said. And unless a person is one of the rare men raised up by God, like a de Maistre or a Lamennais, conversions do not result from books. People who have resisted the proofs for religion expounded with so much talent by those who have gone before us — and whose arguments we are only repeating, after all — will resist with even more arrogance authors whom they consider at best as their equals, if deep down they do not even think of them as quite inferior to themselves. By this I am not saying that we shouldn't write; I am only claiming that we should not be too eager about it. Be it a little sooner or a little later, we are always in good time for the good that is achieved by writings of this kind. The grace of conversion is attached above all to the word: therein lies God's power, miracles are

worked thereby. This is the mysterious net, if it is launched *in nomine Jesu*. Since Peter's time up to our own day it has been so, and so it will be until the end of the world: it is from the spoken word and not from the written word that many conversions result. So, I repeat, don't kill yourself with this work; you will get there, even if you proceed more slowly. Keep on giving me news about yourself from time to time, work less, and restore yourself to good health.

(*Yenveux II, 39-40*)

123 — To Father Guigues, January 17, 1835.

What you tell me about the outcome of the single sermons given at Grenoble confirms the attitude I have always taken, namely, of dissuading our men from this sort of thing which never results in an act of love for God and much less in a conversion. Let us stick with our missions, retreats, catechetical instructions. That is the way grace is communicated to souls. Let us go straight for the goal through the simplicity of our ministry and leave human considerations to those who seek other things than God.

(*Mss. Post.*)

124 — **To Father Vincens**, January 17, 1835.

Our good Master wants to encourage you by blessing your preaching. You have realized, as we have, that the entire success of our endeavours is due to his grace and to his grace alone. Grace penetrates hearts while our words reach the ears. Herein lies the vast difference between our preaching and the sermons, from other aspects infinitely superior, of the great occasion preachers. Miracles multiply at the sound of the missionary's voice and the prodigious number of conversions is so striking that the poor instrument of these marvels is the first to be amazed: as he blesses God and rejoices, he humbles himself because of his own insignificance and nothingness. What an approval these miracles are! Have there ever been greater miracles than those which occur during missions, than those you have worked yourself?

(*Mss. Post.*)

125 — **To Father Honorat**, February 28, 1837.

I worry little about the infinitely small number of bourgeois people who have not yet shown any sign of good will. The majority

of them, if not all, will surrender like the others. In any case, their souls are not worth more or less than those of the least peasants, if we consider them in terms of the price the Lord has paid for them; under other aspects, they may be far less valuable. Thus it is foolish to be more concerned about these gentlemen than about the other good people of the area. It is bad, perhaps even sinful to sacrifice the common good to their caprice or vanity. Hence you have succumbed to weakness in giving in to their requests for instructions in French. You know from experience that such a concession is not expedient. Do you think that in all the missions that I have given in Provence I did not anywhere come across this group of bourgeois people who asked me to preach in French? Everywhere and always I have refused, in conscience, except twice for very serious reasons.

(Yenveux II, 81)

126 — **Diary**, September 4, 1838.

Pastoral visit of the parish of Saint Mary Magdalene; the people of Saint Justus and Saint Barnabas also came. Though it was a

working day, there was a fairly good crowd and thus I dwelt longer on the duties of the people in my instruction before speaking to the children. All who accompanied me and attended me were struck, as I always am, by the sustained attention of those present, including the children, in fact by noting especially the children's attentiveness. This is a sure sign that I follow the only good method by speaking to them in their own language. It also shows that we must put ourselves within the reach of people, not by narrating some idle stories, nor by translating some French speeches word for word, but by explaining one's thought well. In this way we can give good instructions on the most sublime truths and do it with great benefit to the people. Do trust my experience.

(*Mss. Post.*)

127 — **To Father Magnan, in mission at Brignoles, March 8, 1844.**

The cowardice that has taken hold of all of you, my dear Father Magnan, is something quite peculiar; this childish fear of public opinion, this cry of distress you all

emitted at the sight of this formidable town of Brignoles which has terrified and demoralized you to the marrow of your bones, all this fright merely because Father Courtès is not with you! As a matter of fact, had I not been worried about something else, I would have had a good laugh at all the panic. Come on! when you are sent in the name of the Lord, leave aside, once and for all, all these human considerations, the result of a poorly disguised pride and of a lack of trust in the grace of Jesus Christ, whose instruments you have indeed been for so many years. Should you deserve to have this divine grace withdrawn from your ministry, then you would have reason to dread the people's judgment; as long as it abides with you, however, you will convert the people by your simple sermons which are unpretentious but inspired by the spirit of God, who does not operate by way of circuitous phrases and the flowery language of orators...

I recommend that all of you resume attitudes that are in conformity with the dignity of your great ministry; you have not been sent to Brignoles to solicit the applauses either of the parish priest or of the

other priests, or even of the town's bourgeois. You have been sent to convert the people by the grace of Jesus Christ which has never failed you, except when you counted more on your efforts than on his power.

(Yenveux II, 78-80)

128 — Act of Visitation of the Province of England, Maryvale, July 22, 1850.

After recalling the need of prayer and of the spirit of sacrifice for bringing back to Jesus Christ as many erring souls as possible, the Founder continues:

The time is come for attacking error by direct ways, not only by prayer, but by preaching. You are not called on to preserve timidly, as heretofore, the small number of faithful souls, who in the midst of most cruel persecution, had not bent the knee to Baal. At the present day, there is question of reconquering the empire snatched from Jesus Christ, by an incessant attack on all the errors which divide the enemy, who is reduced to the necessity of depending only on the power of numbers and on the protection of the secular arm.

Heresy feels its weakness and calls, so to speak, for a parley, and would desire nothing better than to live at peace with you; this once obtained, it would give you no further trouble. But no! we must advance; its defeat is certain, its time is fixed; it remains for you to contribute your aid to the triumph of Truth: prepare by profound study the arms which you shall have to wield. It is by preaching, accompanied with prayer, that you will introduce the light into men's minds. The world is disposed to hear you, you need only speak in the proper manner and in this you cannot succeed but by study.

The example of the regularity of your life will also contribute to hasten the return of our strayed brethren.

(Copy. Gen. Archives O.M.I.)

**129 — To Father de l'Hermite, at Bordeaux,
August 17, 1852.**

Now that you are back at Bordeaux, I am sending you a good companion who will help in forming a small community. It will thus be easier for you to follow the Rules which you must observe faithfully for your

own sanctification and for the salvation of those whose conversion is your mission.

I also urge everyone of you: do not neglect study. Prepare your instructions well. Do not be satisfied with correcting them only according to your own judgment but get the help of your superior's opinion. Discuss them, if you like but listen to the remarks that may be made. Nourish yourselves with good reading in order to perfect your discernment and to re-enforce your judgment. Do not pursue what is brilliant but what is solid, what can be understood by everyone in your audience, what is instructive and conducive to lasting conversions. This advice is meant not only for you but for everyone, for the greater good.

(Mss. Post.)

**130 — To Father Merlin, superior at Nancy,
September 10, 1852.**

It is only by way of exception and with a dispensation that we preach Lenten sermons. We must preach missions and retreats. Why should we measure ourselves against all those Orders which have pro-

vided men to a given town? By preference let us go to the most abandoned places. Thus, not only am I not concerned with furnishing you the wherewithal to satisfy the wishes of Etain's parish priest, but I insist very much that you tell him we cannot preach the Lenten sermons in his parish. All the parish priests are there for that. All they want is to get a full crowd for Lent, but my thinking is quite different...

In God's name, get rid of these too human thoughts which come under the guise of propriety or something else. Do not worry too much about our reputation regarding talent; but certainly very much about our reputation regarding virtue, regularity, good discipline, good example. Tell this very explicitly to Father Soullier for me. See where all this pretension leads to! God does not want it. He does not bless it. In our time we did not pursue it, and the Lord worked wonders through our ministry. Do what you can according to the capacity God has given you, and do not worry about the rest. If others show more talent, let them profit therefrom if they think it fit. As for ourselves, let us be content to walk

with our feet on the ground. Our Rules are there to set our minds at rest.

(Mss. Post.)

131 — **To Bishop Buissas of Limoges, October 24, 1855.**

Please permit me, Monseigneur, to comment on what you have told me, namely that in Limoges missionaries need not only virtue but talent as well. I agree if it concerns talents proper to the ministry which our missionaries are to carry out. They are called to evangelize the poor and to work for the salvation of the most abandoned souls. To perform this ministry adequately, holiness is needed above all and then, a talent proportionate to the needs of those whom they are to lead to God. This is all that should be required.

(Yenveux II, 80)

132 — **To Father Baret, March 29, 1857.**

I am writing without seeing where to direct my pen, but I must still congratulate you on the success with your sermons at Nantes. This expression is not to my taste

unless if it can be rendered by the following: the *blessings of God*, which presupposes the conversion of souls. Without this, even the most beautiful sermons in the world are nothing to me. I prefer the simple word of a missionary who leads sinners to God.

(*Mss. Post.*)

THE SACRAMENTAL MINISTRY

133 — To Father Tempier, March 11, 1816.

Grans, the first mission preached by the Missionaries of Provence, would be incomplete without the men going to confession.

[We remain] quite united to our dear and good brother Tempier, despite the sacrifice that we make in putting off for eight days our leaving to rejoin him. Not that we can help it; but, in conscience, we cannot leave our work undone. Enormous would have been the number of men we would have left in the lurch, if we had finished on the intended day...

As for us, we never stop hearing confessions. We take in every variety; therein consist our prayers, our preparation, our

thanksgiving and everything else, day and night. The other day I could not say Matins until six o'clock in the evening. If you do not pray for us, we are in a bad fix.

(Rambert I, 181-182)

134 — **To Father Courtès, March 8, 1827.**

I have made it a rule, my dear friend, never to refuse to hear anyone's confession. It is additional extra-ordinary work for me, but I do not shy away from that, because I am convinced that I am, in this way, fulfilling my ministry as a missionary without going on missions. In this way I make the best of my situation. The results are the same, though the means are somewhat different. Since it is impossible for me to do all that our Fathers are doing, I console myself in this way. In confiding this to you, I have explained to you why our correspondence is somewhat delayed. I lack the time. The direction of the house (of Calvary), independently of the confessions of those who live there, also keeps me very busy, and the bishop's house is the end of me. Now you will understand.

(Yenveux II, 87)

135 — **Diary**, January 15, 1844.

The people of Gardanne « converted by the mission preached by our Fathers » are waiting to receive Confirmation. The Archbishop of Aix had thought that it would be « more useful to postpone this ceremony ». Bishop de Mazenod's reaction.

This is what I am going to reply (to the Vicar General): « It is a regrettable mistake. To be sure, there is no great harm in postponing a ceremony; but irreparable harm always results when postponing the administration of a sacrament when the persons concerned are well disposed to receive it. This is especially true of the Sacrament of Confirmation which can be received only from the bishop at intervals of time that are often quite far apart. This proposition is so easily proven that I say nothing more about it. Once I have been shown that in being reconciled with God, a person receives the gift of impeccability, I may modify my opinion, which until then will remain very firm because of the corresponding duties of ministers and recipients regarding Sacraments... »

This letter is considered somewhat harsh. As if I could let a statement that is disas-

trous for souls pass by, a statement which I was told was expressing the Archbishop's sentiments. I could have added several very good reasons to corroborate my opinion, which I omitted so as not to exceed the limits of moderation. At least I could have told him: in this case, we have a large number of people who have been awakened from their slumber through the Gospel preaching. Marvels of grace had to be worked to bring them out of the mess in which they had been wallowing since their childhood. They resisted for a long time, with all the energy the demon, whose slaves they were, had provided them. The first few who surrendered to the urgent invitation of God's goodness, had to sustain a sort of persecution. All those who ended up by following their example had, as they did, to make great sacrifices; they accepted them generously, courageously enduring sarcasms, contempt and even the mocking songs of the local wicked people who were obstinate and did not wish to be converted. Nothing could shake them from their resolutions. Do you think that they merited reconciliation with God after such trials? Most certainly, yes! Very well! here they are restored to favour

such as the merciful goodness of God has fashioned them. Would you delay giving them the holy Eucharist which they have the duty, and let us say, even the right, to receive? Would you wait for six months and more to have them receive Communion? Certainly not! You would be sinning seriously by putting these Christians already reconciled with God to such a test, with the pretext of assuring yourself about their perseverance. Why? Because they are obliged as soon as possible to fulfil this long neglected duty; and undoubtedly too, because we know that absolution given and received does not grant anyone impeccability.

I say the same for the Sacrament of Confirmation. These persons are very well disposed. They are obliged to receive it; they have, moreover, the right to have it administered to them, the more so because they are in a very difficult and dangerous situation. This obliges them to be fortified with all the supernatural strength that God has conferred on this Sacrament to help the Church's children in the struggle which Hell, the world and their own passions strongly wage against them. They have to struggle and you know it. And yet, you would deprive

them of the spiritual protection they would obtain through the sacred character as soldiers of Jesus Christ and as perfect Christians, which the Holy Spirit imprints on their souls by coming to them in this Sacrament! Our Lord has instituted this Sacrament for this purpose, and I do not think that the divine Saviour has done anything that is useless. It is not a matter of knowing whether one will persevere in the grace of reconciliation for six months or a year in order to judge if one is worthy to receive it; it is precisely to persevere in grace that they ask you for it with so much insistence, and I would add, with every right. Yes! a person has the right to receive it as soon as one is well disposed. Since I speak on principle, I hold that a bishop must, under pain of sin, administer it as soon as possible unless he is prevented by the accomplishment of other equally legitimate duties, which he must weigh in the scale before the altar...

However, let him take care not to delude himself. God remunerates pretexts that men themselves judge frivolous. The excuse of wanting to test the converted person is never admissible. No one becomes impeccable

by the grace of reconciliation, no more than by that of the first justification at Baptism — we cannot repeat this too much.

(Yenveux I, 218-221)

136 — Pastoral Letter on Liturgy, February 8, 1846.

The « Royal Priesthood » of Christians in the Liturgy. After an invitation to take part in the singing, he continues:

The Communion of Saints, one of the articles of the Creed, consists in the participation of all the faithful in the same spiritual benefits and merits which they can gain for one another. It is a sort of community of goods in the order of grace. Even though the ties that bind them together are not visible and extend very far, even beyond the borders of this world, still we find a vivid and touching picture of this possession of the same goods and this mysterious unity among all of God's children when they come together at the foot of the altar, with one voice singing the same praises, raising towards Heaven the same voices and simultaneously participating in the same sacrifice. Just as in the primitive Church there

was only one heart and one soul, all have the same sentiments, the same word and the same voice. Seeing them assembled in this holy place... we recognize them as brothers happy to live in common under the same roof and to sit together at the same table; the brotherhood of Christians, their union in God, become manifest in the most tangible manner, and we feel we are in God's house, the only true home for our spirit and hearts. Our very soul somehow becomes aware that especially at this moment are verified the words of the divine Master: where several, where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst to grant them their requests.

The Sacrifice of our altars is offered through the priest's ministry in the name of the Church. The people offer it along with the priest. It is through this sublime cooperation in the mystical immolation of the God-Man that the Royal Priesthood, with which all Christians are invested in union with Jesus Christ, the sovereign priest, is exercised... However the relationship between the priest and the people is never more tangible, the community of action between the one and the other never greater,

than in the sung solemn Mass. Here nothing takes place in an obscure and private manner. The participants are not satisfied with speaking to God in secret, they are all called upon to make their voices resound... During the High Mass, they are not simple spectators but involved in everything, they intervene unceasingly to affirm aloud their complete adherence to what is taking place on the altar. This common action of those present is not reserved to the clergy, but belongs to every one of the faithful present in this holy place.

Piety that would prefer recollection in solitude to this solemn cooperation in the Sacrifice, would not be a proper piety.

(Printed, pp. 18-20)

137 — To Father Viala, in mission at Gréasque, January 17, 1849.

I congratulate you for the good you have already accomplished by God's grace, as well as for what still remains for you to do. I request you to insist very much on the instruction and on the dispositions necessary for the Sacrament of Penance. The important point is that if one confesses indifferently,

without being penetrated by sentiments of sorrow, the animating force needed to obtain the saving effect of absolution, one has done nothing. I am always afraid of this when I hear it said to our missionaries that they confessed a stupendous number of penitents. I have never come even close to the number that I hear quoted by our Fathers. Sorrow and firm purpose of amendment. Insist also on making Jesus Christ known and loved. Speak often about this divine Saviour and everything he has done to save men. Make them take the resolution never to spend a day without praying.

(Mss. Post.)

MERCY

138 — **To the Deacon Nicholas Riccardi,**
February 17, 1826.

Brother Riccardi had run away from the Novitiate of Aix. In a long letter written from Rome, the Founder reprimands him for his fickleness, his lack of generosity. He invites him to reflect, not to break away hastily, and portrays a picture of the community which he should not have left.

I was sure that you were captivated from the very beginning, with everything interiorly attractive that a family devoted to God and to the Church was offering you: a family making great strides on the path of perfection; a family wherein one group is preparing, by the practice of the most excellent virtues, to become worthy ministers of God's mercy to the people, while the others, by assiduous labour and efforts of zeal which are found only among the greatest saints, are renewing the marvels accomplished by the preaching of the first disciples of the Gospel.

(*Yenveux VIII, 307*)

139 — To Father Tempier, from Rome, March 20, 1826.

After recalling once again the extraordinary turn of events that had resulted in the pontifical approbation, the Founder concludes:

The more I ponder our matter, the more I see the hand of God in it. All who have been the instruments of his mercies towards us have also recognized God's intervention... What more do we need? *Video coelos aper-*

tos. In expediting the formalities, there are new arrangements, each one more favourable than the others. From this it follows that if the project did have its opponents, it was to manifest God's mark upon it; they have helped to underline his truly miraculous protection over us in a more striking manner. Let us strive to be worthy of this favour; let us merit to see the plans of God's mercy accomplished in favour of the Congregation and of the poor.

(Missions 1872, 278-282)

140 — **To Father Guigues**, February 20, 1837.

At the mission of Theys, « certain bourgeois families gave scandal by taking part in a sort of crude musical provocative mockery. A number of young people who had let themselves be carried away by this, later came to make their confession. Should Communion be refused to them?» inquires Guigues. « God grant that such an unfortunate idea born of inexperience, did not lead the missionaries to receive these sinners coldly; they should have been welcomed with the warmest kindness » (Diary, February 19, 1837).

Remember that you are sent to sinners, and even to hardened sinners. You

must expect resistance from the devil; he will not easily let go of his prey. This resistance manifests itself now in one way, and now in another. Jesus Christ is always the victor, « *Christus vincit* ». He demands sacrifices, « *Christus imperat* ». He establishes his reign in souls, « *Christus regnat* ». This is all that we desire, this is the result of and compensation for our labours. We are the ministers of his mercy, and so let us always have the tenderness of a father towards all; let us also easily forget the insults that are sometimes committed against us in the exercise of our ministry as the good Lord wishes to forget the offences continually being committed against him. The father of the prodigal son was not content with putting the best robe on him and having a ring put on his finger, he had the fatted calf killed as well. In the same way, we must not only reconcile sinners, but in view of all the graces granted to them during the mission, of the guarantees their fidelity gives to respond thereto and of the efforts they have had to make for all this, we admit them to the sacred banquet, we give them the bread of life so that they can advance in this new path which they are

to follow, and may, at the same time, fulfil an imperative duty that urges them.

(Mss. Post.)

141 — **Diary**, March 13, 1842.

Father Vincens has sent me Father Burfin's letter in which he gives an account of God's blessings showered on the mission he has just preached with Father Lavigne in the diocese of Grenoble. Once again it is our Fathers who have been the instruments of God's mercy in these areas. Should we not be grateful for having been chosen to accomplish so much good in God's Church? Why not make a brief synthesis of this? We would be amazed; and that would be an achievement of which our Congregation can be righteously proud.

(Yenveux I, 13)*

142 — **To Bishop Allard, at Pietermaritzburg**,
June 11, 1855.

I had made Fr. Aubert responsible for writing to you on business matters and he must have written to you about this. I wanted however, to reserve myself for writ-

ing a letter of congratulation to you over your resolve to undertake the conversion of the Kaffirs. I understand that this is no easy matter, but this mission has been entrusted to you, and you must be the apostle of these poor idolators. Let us have confidence that the Gospel seed will produce its fruit in that region as it has in others which have been conquered by the Faith. I do not doubt that you are powerfully assisted by those of our Fathers who have been called to evangelise with you that nation which is still without the Faith. They must have measured beforehand the degree of virtue they must acquire if they are to become ministers of the mercy of God, and real apostles of Jesus Christ.

(Copy. Reg. lettres 1855-1863. Post. DM 10)

FOREIGN MISSIONS

143 — **Constitutions and Rules of 1818**, Part I, ch. 1, para. 3.

N.B. And even though, because of their present small number and the more urgent needs of the people around them, they have to limit the scope of their zeal, for the time

being, to the poor of our countryside and others, their ambition should, in its holy aspirations, embrace the vast expanse of the whole earth.

(*Mss. Post.*)

144 — **To Cardinal Pedicini, *Ponens of the cause*, January 2, 1826.**

The last time I had the honour of conversing with Your Eminence, I had the impression that Your Eminence believed we were requesting the specific approbation of our Congregation only for France. Such a misunderstanding would be too harmful to the good the Congregation intends to accomplish with God's help. Hence I have the duty to assure Your Eminence, by this present letter, that one of the main reasons prompting us to seek the approbation of the Holy See was precisely our ardent desire to spread abroad in all the parts of the Catholic world, the benefits of the ministries to which the members of our Society are dedicated. And this, on the invitation of the common Father of all the faithful as well as at the request of the bishops of various dioceses...

Several members of the Congregation would willingly go and preach the Gospel to non-believers; when they will be more numerous it is possible that the superiors will send them to America, either to be of assistance to poor Catholics who are bereft of every spiritual benefit, or to win new members to the faith.

Your Eminence can conclude from all this that the approbation requested should extend to the entire Church. It was all this that we intended to ask from His Holiness and which we hope to obtain for the greater glory of God and the greatest benefit of souls.

(Missions 1952, 85-86)

145 — **To Father Pascal Ricard**, January 8, 1847.

Monseigneur Blanchet, bishop of Walla Walla, brother of the Archbishop of Oregon, wishes to confide his interesting mission to our Congregation. He desires that the Fathers of our society collaborate with him in extending the Kingdom of Jesus Christ throughout the regions entrusted to him.

Thanks to this choice of predilection, the work of our Congregation will extend from one sea to the other and we will be deployed so that our communications will stretch from Canada to the United States. The new diocese of Walla Walla is in quite a beautiful country wherein the harvest of souls will be very abundant...

I say nothing of how magnificent in the eyes of Faith is the ministry you are going to fulfil. One must go back to the birth of Christianity to find anything comparable. It is an apostle with whom you are associated and the same marvels that were wrought by the first disciples of Jesus Christ will be renewed in our days by you, my dear children, whom Providence has chosen amongst so many others to announce the Good News to so many slaves of the demon who huddle in the darkness of idolatry and who know not God. This is verily the real apostolate which is renewed in our times. Let us thank the Lord for having been deemed worthy to be participants therein in so active a manner...

Respond with joy to this call, be faithful to your vocation and count on the most abundant blessings of God and on a recom-

pense proportionate to the excellence of the great mission you are going to fulfil.

(Mss. Post.)

146 — **To Father Guigues**, January 8, 1847.

He had requested missionaries for Canada.

I feel as you do that we must not send those who feel no attraction for distant missions and that is precisely what troubles me. I have written today in a very persuasive manner. I hope for a response to my invitation which I could not make more pressing since I left no doubt that it should be accepted.

(Yenveux I, Suppl. 95)

147 — **To Father Guigues**, July 20, 1847.

Father Léonard's campaign has procured a good number of recruits who ask to be sent to evangelize the Savages. I have not undertaken never to employ them in other ministries. No doubt what I will take into consideration is mostly their own liking but they will be reasonable when God shows us what we must do for His greater glory.

(Yenveux I, Suppl. 96)

148 — **To Father Semeria at Jaffna, February 21, 1849.**

You do not give me enough details on your way of life, where you live, and your ministry. When will you begin to win the unbelievers? Are you only on your island as parish priests of old Christians? I had always thought the idea was to convert the pagans. That is what we are made for rather than anything else. There are enough bad Christians in Europe without our having to go and look for them so far away. Give me plenty of information on this, even if all there is to report so far is hopes.

(Mss. Post.)

149 — **To Father Bellon, at Maryvale, February 4, 1850.**

As concerns our members, I heartily wish you would tell me which are the ones who would be destined for the missions amongst the infidels. I am well aware that with the expansion you are undergoing, you would not willingly part with several good men who would be of service in your missions but, on the other hand, must we not fill the

pressing needs of our other missions for which the Master has sent us apostles? So you will have to give me an idea as to those whom we could choose amongst your personnel, just as we must choose some from amongst those who are in France. Let us not be afraid of impoverishing ourselves. The good God will know how to provide in some other way for our other needs.

(Mss. Post.)

150 — **To Father Semeria at Jaffna, September 19, 1851.**

When you recommend me to ensure that our young men learn English, you obviously do not know that we have three professors in our Oblationate who are taking a good deal of trouble about this, but everything takes time. I wonder how you reconcile the advice you give me not to let subjects leave until a few months later with the pressing and repeated requests that come to me from every side to send missionaries who had been destined for your island. They have had to be accepted just as they were. They will have a little more difficulty, but they will manage in the end. That will always be

easier than sending you men like St Francis Xavier, as you ask. That would be to demand too much, and I would be afraid of dampening the enthusiasm of our good Oblates if I offered them no alternative but to become St Francis Xaviers, or else to expect to do nothing. Be patient, and when you are able to launch an attack on idolatry, you will see that you will find less difficulty and more consolations in that work than in battling with those degenerate christians who discourage you so much.

(*Mss. Post.*)

151 — **To Father Ricard**, December 6, 1851.

Foreign missions compared to our missions in Europe have a special character of a higher kind, because this is the true apostolate of announcing the Good News to nations which have not yet been called to knowledge of the true God and of his Son Jesus Christ... This is the mission of the apostles: « *Euntes, docete omnes gentes!* » (Mt. 28:19); this teaching of the truth must penetrate to the most backward nations so that they may be regenerated in the waters of baptism. You are among those to whom

Jesus Christ has addressed these words, giving you your mission as he gave their mission to the apostles who were sent to convert our fathers. From this point of view, which is a true one, there is nothing higher than your ministry.

(Yenveux I, Suppl. 107)

152 — **To Bishop Taché**, May 28, 1854.

I am sending you an angel in the person of Fr. Grandin; you may know him; you saw him in the novitiate and your choice fell on him. He is delighted to consecrate himself to your difficult mission; he is a generous soul, just what you need. I would very much have liked to send with him a companion of the same calibre, but the one on whom I had set my mind has a terrible fear of the cold. To have sent him would have meant doing violence to him, while he is going willingly to Ceylon. You know that for distant and difficult missions I make it my duty to take our subjects' desires into account; to do otherwise would expose me to many disappointments.

(Yenveux I, Suppl. 96; IX, 98)

153 — **To Bishop Taché, November 29, 1854.**

The practice of the Jesuits for the foreign missions is not to send anybody who does not ask to be sent, and even then true will has to be distinguished from a mere velleity. It is so difficult when one makes a mistake in this matter. We have discovered this in Natal, an infinitely less difficult mission than your own. We have had to expel one of the companions of Mgr Allard, and another is pestering me to recall him. These are indolent souls, unfaithful to grace; but that does not mean that they cause less disorder in our ranks. While I have been edified to learn of the work you are doing, I was distressed to see that your missionaries are not always in pairs as I have so often recommended; in such a situation it is always better to have fewer missions.

(Yenveux I, Suppl. 96)

154 — **To the Fathers of Red River, June 28, 1855.**

You go out from my embrace to fly to the conquest of souls and, one can truly say, of the most abandoned of souls, for is it possible to find souls that are more lost than

those of these poor Indians whom God has called us to evangelize, a priceless privilege? I am well aware of the sacrifices, the privations, the torments that you have to pass through to obtain the results that you seek, and it is this that weighs so heavily on my heart, but what will your merit be before God if, faithful to your vocation, you become the instruments of his mercies towards these poor infidels whom you are rescuing from the grasp of the devil who had made them his prey, and if in this way you extend the Kingdom of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth! I am not surprised that the consolations that the Lord allows you to taste in the exercise of your sublime ministry fill your souls with joy and make all pains seem light to you. The story alone which you have told me fills me with thankfulness to God and softens the pains that I endure because of you, who are ceaselessly present to my thoughts, and whose labours I appreciate so greatly. To comfort you, I wish that I could send you a great company of workers, but since I cannot I am glad to be sending a small number who are worthy in every way of walking in your footsteps.

(Copy. Reg. lettres, 1855-1863, Post.)

155 — **To Father Maisonneuve**, March 13, 1857.

The tiniest detail of what concerns you interests and touches me. How could I be insensitive to the sufferings that you are enduring to extend the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and to respond to your beautiful vocation, which has called you to the most meritorious mission that I know. There is no doubt that you are buying souls at the price of your own blood, you, the first apostles of those souls whom God wishes to save by means of your ministry. If there had not been you to seek them as far as the ends of the earth, what would have become of them? I can understand that the consolation of seeing so many creatures made in the image of God enter into the sheepfold of Jesus Christ as a result of your care for them is a great recompense for all your efforts, an unutterable consolation; it is this that sustains your courage, and, I can say to you, softens the pain that I feel in being separated from you.

(Mss. Winnipeg)

**156 — To Bishop Guigues, Provincial of
Canada, May 6, 1857.**

After the publication of Father Baudre's letter in *L'Univers*.

What right does he think he has to judge an entire nation on the basis of meetings with a few individuals, when he has perhaps even misunderstood their actions? He has only to set foot in a country and behold, he pronounces himself with unforgivable frivolity on the character, habits and feelings of its inhabitants, and shares these impressions, on which he has reflected so little, with an indiscreet friend or relative, with as little judiciousness as himself, who does not fear to make public remarks which he should in fact have objected to, since they were clearly the result of a ridiculous prejudice and very offensive to a nation that we esteem, that we love, and whose excellent qualities we have very often had an opportunity to notice.

(*Yenveux VI, 60*)

157 — To Father Faraud, May 28, 1857.

My dear son and beloved Father Faraud, I have just read, all at once and with lively

interest and unflagging attention the admirable account of the La Nativité Mission that you sent me on December 6 of last year. How could I express to you all the feelings that it awoke in my soul? I felt called first of all to give thanks to God for his continual help and for the miracles that he has designed to work by means of your ministry. Then, in spirit, I pressed you to my heart, touched to the point of tears by all that you have had to suffer to conquer those souls for Jesus Christ, who has clothed you with his power and sustained you by his grace among so many difficulties. But also, what a reward you will have beyond this world, when one thinks of the wonders that have been brought about by the power of your ministry. One has to go back to the first preaching of Saint Peter to find anything similar. An apostle like him, sent to proclaim the Good News to those savage nations, the first man to speak to them of God, to bring them to knowledge of Jesus the Savior, to show them the way that leads to salvation, to give them rebirth in the holy waters of baptism — one can only prostrate oneself before you, so privileged are you among your brothers in the Church of God by rea-

son of the choice that he has made of you to work these miracles.

(Copy. Reg. lettres 1855-1863, Post. DM 10)

158 — To Bishop Allard, Vicar Apostolic of Natal, May 30, 1857.

There is matter for extreme concern in the lack of success of your mission to the Kaffirs. There are few examples of such sterility. What! not a single one of those poor infidels to whom you have been sent has opened his eyes to the truth you were bringing them! I have difficulty in consoling myself over it since you were not sent to the few heretics who inhabit your towns. It is to the Kaffirs that you have been sent, it is their conversion that the Church expects from the holy ministry she has entrusted to you. It is, therefore, to the Kaffirs that you must direct all your thoughts and efforts. All our missionaries must know this and take it to heart. This is what makes me so unhappy when I hear of Fr. Barret's lack of concern of which you have informed me.

I would be pleased to see you going out and surveying your territory a little. Mis-

sionary bishops do not fix themselves in one residence never to leave it. You should build up relations with your Kaffirs to whom you have essentially been sent.

(Copy. Reg. lettres 1855-1863, Post. DM 10)

159 — **To Bishop Allard, at Pietermaritzburg,**
November 10, 1857.

I must admit, my dear Lord Bishop, that your letters still trouble me greatly. Up till now your mission is a failed mission. Frankly one does not send a Vicar Apostolic and a fairly large number of missionaries for them to look after a few scattered settlements of old Catholics. A single missionary would have been enough to visit these Christians. It is clear that the Vicariate has been established in this area simply for the evangelisation of the Kaffirs. Now, we have already been there for several years and you are involved in something quite different. I think, to speak truthfully, that you are not fulfilling your mission and at the same time are doing all in your power to help the English colonists. What is particularly disturbing is that you have so many complaints about those working with you. Examine your

conscience a little before God and see whether you ought not to make some changes in your relations with them and in the way you are running things. Such disaffection is unheard of. Everyone admires your virtues, but you lack something that would make people go beyond admiration and feel that attachment which facilitates obedience and docility. It is horrifying to see the number of defections in your territory.

All this is very disturbing and one trembles when it is a question of sending someone to the area.

Since I am discussing disturbing facts, you will allow me to add that it seems to me that you are acting far too much like a European bishop; that is to say that you keep too much out of concrete activity and involve yourself in the administration. Elsewhere I see the Vicars Apostolic putting their hands to the plough like any other missionary, in some territories taking charge of one mission station on their own and in others exploring the country themselves and founding here and there among the pagans to whom they are sent mission stations to which they then send missionaries to con-

tinue their work. They learn the local languages in order to carry out the ministry which is their responsibility, however difficult this study may be. In short, they are at the head of everything that zeal for the salvation of the pagans can inspire. It seems to me that you are not acting in this way and perhaps one ought to attribute the failure of your mission so far to the methods you are using.

(Copy. Reg. lettres 1855-1863, Post.)

160 — To Father Gérard, at the Saint-Michel Mission, October 28, 1959.

It is a real pleasure for me to follow you step by step in the advances and setbacks of your missions. I would love to know day by day what you are doing for the glory of God and the salvation of those poor souls that you have been called to evangelise. I know how difficult the Kaffirs are to convert. The least of your successes would be considered by me as a great blessing from God. Your reward, as you know, will not be measured by your success but by the work you have done and by the efforts of your zeal. Moderate this, however, so as not to

go beyond your strength and run the risk of falling ill.

(Mss. Post.)

161 — **To Fathers Faraud and Clut, at Athabaska, December 9, 1859.**

I need to tell you that I never cease being preoccupied with you, both to rejoice at the good that you are doing in your sublime ministry, and to suffer humanly speaking because of all the privations and sufferings that you endure. With what great interest did I speak about this with your collaborator the holy Bishop (Mgr Grandin) whom I am sending back to you. I speak of these things with him every day, and I speak about them to everybody whenever I have an opportunity. I know that you are offering all your sufferings to God for the salvation of those poor lost souls whom you are leading by grace to the knowledge of the truth, to the love of Jesus Christ, and to eternal salvation.

It is this that consoles me most of all when I consider that you have been chosen as the first apostles to proclaim the good news to nations which without you would

have never known God... It is wonderful, it is magnificent to be able to apply in so real a way the beautiful words of the Master *Elegi vos ut eatis*. What a vocation! If, as I do not doubt, you know how to respond to it, what will be your recompense? If, as I must hope, the good God has mercy on me, when you have pulled me out of purgatory by your merits and your kind prayers, and one day far from now I see you arrive in heaven loaded with the spoils of Hell, that is, with all the souls whom you will have rescued from the empire of the devil, what a renewal of happiness, what a triumph it will be for me! These thoughts soften the pain that I feel when I think of your sufferings.

(*Mss. Post.*)

162 — **To Fathers Maisonneuve and Tissot,
at Lac la Biche, December 13, 1859.**

Throughout the time when Mgr Grandin has been staying with me, we have done nothing but talk of our Red River mission. I already knew how much it meant in the eyes of God and of the Church, but all the news that our new Bishop has given me has

filled me with greater and greater admiration. He took care to efface himself, and it is impossible to be more modest, more humble, than that holy man! What a good brother he is for you! He had nothing but good to say of each one of you. He intends to make a journey into Savoy simply to give news of one of you to his family. He counts nothing too much if he can give pleasure. What an excellent character! He has won all hearts here as well. So I congratulate you on having such a Superior and all that I ask for and hope is that you will live in the most perfect possible accord with him in all the relations that you have together. I will do all that I can to lighten your burden, to give him some companions on his return journey to your country. They will not be as numerous as I should like, because we cannot meet every need and also because for your mission stronger health is needed than that enjoyed by most of our young fathers or scholastics. I will choose the best men that we have, not only from this point of view, but also for zeal and devotion. I know that is needed to be able to do any good among your Indians and in your climate which is so harsh. Happily, you will

serve as models for them, and they will only have to walk in your steps and imitate you. What I ask above all is that charity should reign among you all. *Ubi charitas ibi pax.*

(*Mss. Winnipeg*)

163 — To Fathers Végreville and Moulln, at Ile à la Crosse, April 17, 1860.

My dear children, I think of you as true apostles. You have been chosen by our divine Saviour to be the first to go and announce the good news of salvation to the poor Indian people who, before you arrived among them, were wallowing under the power of the devil in the thickest darkness. You are doing among them what the first apostles of the Gospel did among the nations that were known in earlier times. This is a privilege that has been reserved for you, and it makes your merit, if you are well aware of the sublime character of your mission, like that of the first apostles, propagators of the teaching of Jesus Christ. For the love of God, be sure that you do not lose the tiniest jewel in your crown! Although you may be isolated at times, never lose sight of the fact that you are always an active member

of the holy family to which you have had the honor of being joined by your religious profession; in all the circumstances of life you will find guidance, encouragement and consolation in the holy code by which the family is governed.

(*Mss. Rome*)

164 — **To Father Gérard, at the Saint-Michel mission, September 4, 1860.**

I take great interest in reading about what you are doing in your work for the conversion of those poor Kaffirs who resist with a diabolic stubbornness all that your zeal prompts you to do to bring them to a knowledge of the true God and to their own sanctification. Their obstinacy is truly deplorable and must be the source of great sorrow for you. After so many years not a single conversion; it is awful! You must not lose heart because of it. The time will come when the merciful grace of God will produce a sort of explosion and your Kaffir Church will be formed. You ought perhaps to penetrate deeper among these savage tribes in order to bring this about. If you were to meet some who had not already been indoc-

trinated by heretics and who had had no contact with white men you would be likely to do better. Do not forget that you have been sent for the conquest of souls and remind Fr. Bompard of this also. You must not be unwilling to make an assault and you must pursue the enemy to his furthest hideouts. Victory is promised only to perseverance. Fortunately the reward is not measured solely by success and you need only to have worked to that end in order to achieve it.

(Mss. Post.)

STUDY OF LANGUAGES

165 — **To Bishop Guigues, July 25, 1848.**

I am surprised that you are in a quandary about giving Father Telmon companions who speak English. How is it that all our Fathers in Canada have not made it their duty and their pleasure to learn English? We have thirty Oblates at the seminary and there is not one who is not learning this language. You should hear all these young men conversing. They speak nothing but

English in their recreation periods. What does Father Telmon mean by protesting on the grounds that he does not know English? This is a new mentality consonant with the republican spirit of our time. Formerly missionaries were sent all over the world; not one knew the language of the people he was going to evangelize. They set to with courage and they succeeded... So put your people to work at learning English.

(Mss. Post.)

166 — To Father Semeria, superior in Ceylon, May 14, 1849.

Insist firmly that our missionaries learn the languages. This is an indispensable duty for them, and you yourself must apply yourself to it. See what advantages the Jesuit Fathers gain by doing this.

(Mss. Post.)

167 — To Bishop Allard, at Pietermaritzburg, November 10, 1857.

As for the difficulty which makes you postpone success for several more years, it is no greater than that faced elsewhere

where people started straight into their work. Six months are enough for our missionaries in Ceylon to learn the very difficult language of Singalese etc. It is the same in Oregon. How can you need more than a year to understand Kaffir and make yourself understood? But in this case the feeling of duty should stimulate and help us to overcome the difficulties. You can tell our Fathers that I do not accept that in one year people do not put themselves in a position to start exercising their ministry. But I say again that you must give the example because you are sent to the Kaffirs to bring them to a knowledge of the truth.

(Copy. Reg. lettres 1855-1863, Post. DM 10)

168 — **To Father Bihan, in Africa, September 3, 1860.**

I admit that it must not be easy to learn the Kaffir language, but you know that missionaries always share a little in the miracle of Pentecost. Invoke the Holy Spirit, then, that he may bring to completion the gifts you did not fully receive on the day of your confirmation. You received then the germ of

knowledge which must now develop in you for the service of God and the salvation of souls.

(*Mss. Post.*)

PARISHES (1)

169 — **To Father Honorat**, January 17, 1843.

I am not well enough informed to decide the question of New York for the reason that I have just given you. How can you impoverish yourselves to the extent of depriving yourselves of the services of Father Telmon? And what ministry do they propose at New York? Is it not to take charge of a parish in that city? What then will happen to the missions? I was never in favour of establishing ourselves in the United States because it seemed to me that there were nothing but parishes there and the project

(1) For other texts, cfr.:

— E. LAMIRANDE, *Le ministère paroissial dans la Congrégation du vivant du Fondateur*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 23 (1964), pp. 273-290.

of New York seems to be nothing more than that.

As for Toronto, what do they propose? Going there to learn English? But are there any missions in that region? You speak to me of the Iroquois. Are they something other than the native people in the diocese of Montreal? I cannot judge the importance of this mission. If it amounts to being parish priests of these people, isolated there as such in a fixed situation, you know that would not be for us.

(Yenveux II, 141)

**170 — To Father Casimir Aubert, in England,
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 but I would wish that they might be more than simple incumbents there. I insist that they be able to extend their zeal, first in the vicinity and then still further away as has been done at Penzance. It is why I desire so much that the mission of Ashby be a success.

(Yenveux II, 190)

171 — **To Bishop Wiseman**, August 17, 1847.

I must not keep to myself my intention that our missionaries be not reduced to the status of parish clergy. I would wish to found in England a real community of our Oblates, living according to their Rule within their house and thence going forth as ordered by the Bishops to bring aid where it is deemed useful.

(Yenveux VIII, 4)

172 — **To Bishop Guigues**, September 15, 1848.

It appears that the Bishop of Pittsburgh insists that our Fathers serve a church in the central part of the city where he wishes them to be placed. Let us not be particular and since Providence has permitted us to expand, let us take care of each mission which God confides to us.

(Yenveux II, 138)

173 — **To Bishop Guigues**, September 26, 1848.

On the subject of being at the service of the Catholics of Bytown, we know it is

quite repugnant to our Fathers to serve in a manner too similar to the parish ministry. They have been known to say on other occasions that they were made to be missionaries, not parish priests. One should be able to organize their service as a kind of mission but in such a way that our Fathers might never be less than two together with a brother to cook their food; if they could be three or more, that would still be better; let us not overlook that the members of our Society wish and ought to live in community... we do not lack members but we must always take care to employ them in a manner consonant with their vocation.

(Yenveux II, 185)

174 — **To Mr. Hope-Scott, in Scotland, January 17, 1859.**

Fr. Noble must have explained to you the reasons which determined the Council of the Congregation to leave Galashiels. When your esteemed family lived in that place, our presence was retained by gratitude and the charm of constant relations with yourself and your kin. But to be able to continue this

simple parochial service, it would have been necessary to establish there or elsewhere a community of missionaries who could fulfil the duties of their vocation which are not precisely to be parish priests but real missionaries going from place to place to preach the truths of salvation and bring souls back to God.

I had at first hoped that this community, composed of a certain number of priests who would start it for the purpose of renewal in religious virtues, study and rest before plunging into new work, that this community, I say, could be formed at Edinburgh, but the conditions are too far beyond the means of the Congregation to be acceptable. Besides, as the Jesuit Fathers are expected at Edinburgh, they no longer need the services of our people.

(Copy. Reg. lettres 1855-1863, Post. DM 10)

RETREAT MINISTRY

175 — **Act of Visitation of Notre-Dame du Laus, October 18, 1835.**

Another very important observation occurs to us by the edifying groups of priests who come daily to make their retreat at Laus. It is highly important that they find among us all the assistance they have a right to expect for their spiritual needs. It would not at all suffice that the entire period of their retreat be spent in examining their conscience in order to make a good confession, as many have done so far. Certainly, this is a good thing, but it is not all that must be done during a retreat.

If we really want to support the Spirit of God who is inviting these priests into solitude to speak to their hearts, if we wish to fulfil conscientiously the mission the Rule gives us in similar cases concerning our priests and accomplish a great task, if, in a word, we were to accomplish the end of our Institute, it is imperative that we apply ourselves more and better than we have done hitherto in this essential sector of our Congregation's ministry: *praebebuntur privatim*

in interiore domo, non pauca exercitia spiritualia viris clericis, seu laicis ad nos venientibus, ut, cum majori recollectione, magno salutis suae negotio invigilent (Art. XIII, para. VII, c. IV, p. 1). We must make all who come for their retreat in our communities do the standard spiritual exercises. We can estimate the benefits which will result therefrom both from the ones we have given and the satisfaction experienced by those for whom we provided this year the opportunity of making these exercises. And these were fervent priests!

What greater profit yet would be derived by others who may be less fervent or who would need to become so!

While waiting for all our Fathers to become fit, through special studies in this subject, to exercise this ministry properly, we assign to this work the Reverend Novice Master, who, by reason of his office, is already initiated to this kind of responsibility. This does not mean that the local superior may not also be involved in this work, to the extent that his duties will permit it. Until further orders, the time-table put up on the door of the tribune will be followed for such retreats.

It is also our ardent desire that greater attention be given to directing lay people who come to make what are known as novenas. No doubt, they have hitherto derived the most valuable advantage by being reconciled to God through a good confession. Considering the good dispositions they bring when God's grace calls them to this shrine, what benefits could we not obtain for these people, what means of perseverance could we not provide for them, what guarantees of predestination could we not give them by means of well-directed spiritual exercises! If, because of our small numbers and many occupations, we cannot as yet do all that is needed to establish fully the method we are indicating for the laity, it is nevertheless essential that we come as close to it as we can, while waiting for us to regularize this service, as we intend to do. Let us not limit our zeal, for it is God who pours out the measure of his blessings on our poor little Congregation and on all the works its Institute undertakes!

(Printed. Post.)

YOUTH MINISTRY (1)

176 — **Journal of deliberations... of the Association of the Christian Youth of Aix, April 25, 1813.**

On his return to Aix, in 1812, the young Father de Mazenod becomes aware that the youth is growing up without any Christian education in the Colleges that are under the control of the university monopoly created by Napoleon. He decides to fight against this evil. He wrote:

What means can we use to succeed in such a great undertaking? There is no other way than the one set in motion by the seducer himself. He thinks that he can corrupt the whole of France by perverting the youth. To this goal, he is directing all his efforts. Very well! it will be on the youth that I too will work.

(*Mss. Post. DM VIII, 2, p. 3*)

(1) For other texts on this topic, cfr.:

- Y. BEAUDOIN, *Le Fondateur et les jeunes*, in *Vie Oblate Life*, t. 36(1977), pp. 135-149.
- Idem. *Our Founder in relation to youth apostolate*, *ibid.* pp. 127 ff.

177 — **The Rules of 1818**, ch. 3, para. 3.

The Missionaries of Provence must, like their Founder, take care of the youth.

The direction of youth will be considered one of the essential works of the Institute. The Superior General will specially appoint one or several missionaries to this ministry, which he himself will carry out as sedulously as the other duties of his office will allow him. A youth Society is to be established in all our houses. The Superior General will require the missionaries to give him as careful and detailed an account of this Society's state as of the novitiate itself.

(Mss. Post. DM, ms. 1)

178 — **To Father Semeria, at Jaffna**, September 29, 1853.

Fr. Duffo's success with the children is enough to prove what needs to be done to form a christian community that will know and serve Jesus Christ our Master. The fathers and mothers are too encrusted with ignorance and antichristian habits for us to hope to achieve much with them, but by occupying oneself with the youth, caring for

them, attaching oneself to them, one will achieve the renewal of that nation: such is my conviction.

(*Mss. Post.*)

179 — **To Bishop E. Semeria, Vicar Apostolic of Jaffna, October 10, 1857.**

May you soon be able to deal with the youth in order to give a different spirit from the one they get from their families. When you acquire funds you will see whether you are able to call for nuns.

(*Mss. Post.*)

TEACHING MINISTRY (1)

180 — **To Father Etienne Semeria, at Jaffna, May 9, 1848.**

The plan of Bishop Bettachini of calling the Sisters and the Brothers of the Christian Schools is very good, but impracticable in

(1) For other texts, cfr.:

— E. LAMIRANDE, *Les oeuvres d'enseignement dans la Congrégation du vivant du Fondateur*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 25 (1966), pp. 3-34.

the manner in which he intends it and especially today with the difficulty of getting anything from the Propagation of the Faith. There is perhaps not a single Brother of the Christian Schools who knows English, and among the Sisters, with the exception of the Dames of the Sacred Heart, I do not think any more are to be found. The other plan would be more practical if the means could be found of paying for the passages. I could send plenty of subjects for you to use for teaching although that is not at all the vocation of those who come to join us; but if they were used for this work only for a time perhaps this would suit them...

As for the schools, it might perhaps be easier to take on that responsibility for the future if we had a house residence and if we were to put some of our brothers there, but the really difficult thing would always be the finances.

(Mss. Post.)

181 — **To Father Verdet, in Texas, September 2, 1852.**

I can understand that your zeal may have inspired you to do something for poor souls

so forsaken, but it was not necessary to do so much all at once. I have read your letter to the Council. Their reply, with one voice, was that it was never intended to form a college in the sense that you intend, the care of which would absorb all our forces in Texas. We send missionaries to convert souls and not to compete in a college with establishments already founded elsewhere and well established. How can we attempt to rival in such a body so rich in subjects as the Jesuits? How is it that you are all together at Galveston, when half of you were destined for the missions, and you ask for help, and you even say who you would like to be sent to you?

You must understand that our Congregation is not a teaching congregation like the Jesuits. We were founded to give missions etc. Our family is too young in the Church and too poor in subjects for it to be possible to take a large number of them away from the special vocation that distinguishes us and use them in colleges. For that purpose we would have to give ourselves to studies other than those that are necessary for missionaries to be able to fulfil their ministry worthily. So it is only exceptionally that we

have been able to take on the responsibility of a college, and we cannot take on a second without all the conditions that are necessary to ensure the success of such an establishment.

(Yenveux II, 27)

182 — **To Bishop Odin of Galveston, June 20, 1857.**

It seems that the college at Galveston is and will be for a long time nothing other than a commercial school where the pupils studying Latin and especially those who are aiming at an ecclesiastical career are very few in number. To teach ordinary classes in such an institution it is not necessary to employ priests whose zeal could be better used in the service of souls in a country where the vineyard of the Lord is in need of workers. A religious congregation made up simply of teaching brothers would be enough. In view of the situation it is not surprising that our Fathers have had the idea of leaving, and that in the end they have decided on it by means of a resolution whose consequence will be that they will be applying themselves

to a form of ministry that is more suitable to their vocation. For you are doubtless aware, Monseigneur, that even the education of ecclesiastics is only a secondary end of the Institute of the Oblates of Mary, and that the instruction of lay persons in the human sciences is quite foreign to them.

(Copy. Reg. lettres 1855-1863, Post. DM 10)

**183 — To Father Gaudet, at Brownsville,
August 28, 1858.**

You have not been at all deceived in hearing that Fr. Tabaret has been sent to Europe to recruit subjects. He will return with a little colony, an immense sacrifice that I have had to make to save the college at Bytown from ruin. This is necessary, but you know the repugnance that I have always felt for this sort of establishment. One only has to read the primitive Rule. I gave way in the case of America because I was assured that it was necessary for the service of the Church in that country.

(Copy. Reg. lettres 1855-1863, Post. DM 10)

MARIAN SHRINES (1)

184 — **Diary**, January 26, 1837.

Acceptance of the shrine of N.D. de Lumières despite the dearth of members.

But how can I consent to let such a wonderful opportunity slip, which very likely will never come again; how can I not fear later regrets and perhaps the hidden reproaches of so many of our Fathers who are full of zeal and love for their state which prompts them to spread everywhere the fruits of their holy ministry; and who are imbued with such filial devotion to the Most Holy Virgin, our Mother, which gives them the ambition to become the propagators of devotion to her in all the shrines consecrated to her name.

(*Mss. Post.*)

(1) For other texts on this topic, cfr.:

— E. LAMIRANDE, *La desserte des sanctuaires de la T. S. Vierge. Place parmi les fins de la Congrégation d'après Mgr de Mazenod*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 17 (1958), pp. 97-118.

185 — **Minutes of the General Chapter**, January 4, 1850.

The question of establishing a house or residence at Notre-Dame de la Garde was taken up as the third item. For some years now, since the foundation of our first house of Marseilles, the Fathers of this house have constantly served this holy and revered shrine of Notre-Dame de la Garde. This place, so dear to the religious-minded people of Marseilles, as well as to the whole of Provence, has thus been entrusted to the care of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate for a good number of years now. The sacred pilgrimage has been continuously preserved and even considerably developed under their direction. Since the concourse of the faithful has increased very much in the course of time, the presence and the ministry of one Father, having the responsibility and the title of chaplain, is no longer sufficient. The divine service and devotion of the people require something more. It is this increasingly felt need that persuaded the lay Administrators of the shrine to ask His Lordship the Bishop of Marseilles to establish a special house of his Missionary Oblates

whose particular and definite aim would be the daily service of the chapel.

(Mss. Gen. Arch. O.M.I.)

186 — Acts of the 1850 General Chapter,
August 26, evening.

This house (of N.D. de l'Osier) is situated in a very satisfactory locality. The dioceses of Grenoble and Valence offer the Fathers a very vast field for increasing their zeal in the works of the holy ministry, and all the missions they preach are blessed, thanks to God's protection, with most consoling results. Their ministry is also accomplished with much fruit in religious communities to which they are frequently called to preach retreats. The people who have been evangelized subsequently go to consult their missionaries at the shrine of N.D. de l'Osier, which is flourishing.

(Mss. Gen. Arch. O.M.I.)

187 — To Father Vincens, February 22, 1853.

Project of an establishment at N.D. de Cléry.

I am very pleased with Orleans. There is good to be done in this diocese which

needs some life, and this is true also of this abandoned shrine of the Blessed Virgin. Should we not be proud that we have been called to restore it just as the good Lord has given us the grace to do at Laus, l'Osier, Lumières and La Blachère?

(Yenveux VII, 42)

FORMATION OF PRIESTS

188 — **To Bishop Casanelli d'Istria, of Ajaccio, September 19, 1834.**

Importance of choosing Seminary directors.

You are aware of Father Albini's reputation: he is a learned theologian and also a holy missionary; he is teaching theology with distinction since a great number of years and he spends his vacations in evangelizing the poor... Then I will give you as superior the priest who is most distinguished in our regions for his deep piety, his vast knowledge and his delicate and refined spirit.

(Rey I, 610)

189 — **To Father Guibert, October 18, 1834.**

A vast horizon is opening up before us; we are perhaps called to inject new life into the clergy and the entire people of Corsica. The Bishop is inviting us to be in charge of his Seminary and he is prepared to entrust the missions of his diocese to us.

(Paguelle de Follenay I, 315)

190 — **To Father Guigues, at N.D. de l'Osier, May 27, 1835.**

So far, I have been able to send to Ajaccio only Guibert, Telmon and Brother Ferrand, without whom, Guibert tells me, he could not have opened the Seminary, so useful has he been. Let us not argue about these good Brothers after this. Thus, I am going to admit Brother Roux to his final Oblation.

(Yenveux VII, 221)

191 — **Constitutions and Rules of 1853, Part I, ch. III, a. 1.**

After the missions, the most important work of our Congregation is undoubtedly

the direction of seminaries, in which clerics receive their own special training. For it is in these seminaries, in the seclusion of God's house, and under the protection of the Most Holy and Immaculate Virgin Mary, that formation is given to those who are to teach sound doctrine to the people, and to guide them along the way of salvation. In vain would the missionaries labor for the conversion of sinners, if the parochial clergy were not men filled with the Holy Spirit, earnestly following in the footsteps of the Divine Shepherd, and feeding with watchful and constant care, the sheep that have returned to Him. So far as we are able, we shall courageously devote ourselves, with all our mind and heart, to this undertaking, which is so sacred and of such great importance.

(Printed. 25-26)

192 — To Father Berne, at the Seminary of Fréjus, February 5, 1854.

I do not know how to express the pleasure you brought me with the good news you give about your community and your Seminary. I do not know any more delight-

ful compensation in this world than the efforts of your zeal and devotedness. The diocese will experience the benefit of your good teaching and your edifying example, and God will bless you for the good you will have done for souls. It is thus that each one of us cooperates, each in his own sphere, to spread the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

(Mss. Post.)

URGENT NEEDS OF THE CHURCH

193 — **To the Parish Priest of Barjols**, August 20, 1818.

Our duty is to rush to where there is the most urgent need.

(Yenveux I, 107)

194 — **To the Archbishop of Aix**, December 16, 1819.

(We are) always ready to move quickly at all times and at the least sign to that place where obedience shows us that some good is to be done.

(Copy. Post.)

195 — **Diary**, March 27 and 28, 1850.

I received a letter from the Propaganda which makes me reflect very much. Bishop Barnabo proposes to offer us a new Vicariate Apostolic which is to be established in the Eastern district of Cape of Good Hope, known as the *Land of Natal*. It is still a British colony.

This is an important matter that is launched here, which demands reflection and light from above. As things are, it is impossible to accept this invitation. It comes from God, however. None of us even dreamt about it, and it comes to us by the means the Church uses. Hence we must place ourselves in God's presence before we answer. The salvation of souls is at stake; furthermore, it is a call to fulfil the primary task of our Institute, and this call definitely comes from God. Very well! I have an idea of how to reply. We have recognized that the ministry entrusted to our missionaries in Algeria is not the one we should be involved in. The Bishop has a way of seeing things contrary to our spirit. He agreed to give them in Blida work that befits essentially community men. He went back on his

decision and has reduced our Fathers to the state of parish priests of small villages where there is practically no good to be done. I leave aside his procedures which must not be taken into consideration when it is a matter of serving God. What it amounts to is that in Algeria, our Fathers are not where they should be, and since another career opens before us, by leaving this post we could undertake the other. It is a matter of preferring a mission which is offered us by the agency of the Head of the Church and which furthermore, is very much in conformity with the spirit of our Institute and with the end proper to our Congregation.

These are the thoughts the good Lord inspires in me and which have been foremost in my mind today during the visits we made to the churches on this Holy Thursday. I have prayed God very much to grant me the grace to know his will and abide by it...

I would be unfaithful to God's call if I declined to accept the offer made to us, when the Sacred Congregation, ignoring the advice to appeal to the Jesuits or the sons of Libermann, wanted us to take charge of this mission.

(Rey II, 331-332)

IV. THE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS

196 — Preface to the Constitutions and Rules.

And how should men who want to follow in the footsteps of their divine Master Jesus Christ conduct themselves if they, in their turn, are to win back the many souls who have thrown off his yoke? They must strive to be saints. They must walk courageously along the same paths trodden by so many before them: apostolic labourers for the Gospel who, while carrying out the same ministry to which they themselves now feel called handed on such splendid examples of virtue. They must wholly renounce themselves, striving solely for the glory of God, the good of the Church, and the growth and salvation of souls. They must constantly renew themselves in the spirit of their vocation, living in a state of

habitual self-denial and seeking at all times to reach the very summit of perfection. They must work unremittingly to become humble, meek, obedient, lovers of poverty and penance, mortified, free from inordinate attachment to the world or to family, men filled with zeal, ready to sacrifice goods, talents, ease, self, even their life, for the love of Jesus Christ, the service of the Church, and the sanctification of their brethren. And thus, filled with unbounded confidence in God, they are ready to enter the combat, to fight, even unto death, for the greater glory of his most holy and sublime Name.

(Rules of 1826, Mss. Post.)

RELIGIOUS LIFE

197 — **Petition to Pope Leo XII, December 8, 1825.**

They themselves have been struck by the wonders that grace has achieved through their ministry. They feel that to become worthy of their vocation, they must walk in the footsteps of the Saints; that the members of their Society must have the possi-

bility of working at their perfection, and at the same time, they would provide the people with the means of salvation by preaching penance to them.

They have resolved to embrace the evangelical counsels and to devote themselves totally to whatever would promote the greatest glory of God, the salvation of the most abandoned souls, and the service of the Church.

The Rules and Constitutions of the Society of the Missionary Oblates of Saint Charles (which is the name they had taken), commonly known as the Missionaries of Provence, have been drawn up in this spirit.

(Mss. Cong. of Bishops and Regulars, Rome)

198 — **Retreat Notes, 1826.**

The examination on my duties as an ordinary religious must include examining my response to the extra-ordinary grace of my vocation, taking into account this grace's progress and noting the continuous succession of infidelities, resistance and ingratitude. Even though, by force of circumstances, I could not work in the missions for the past three years, I will look into the

preceding years to discover faults I have committed in carrying out this ministry that is proper to my vocation. Then I will examine myself on how I have lived my vows, and I will insist on the obedience I owe to the Rules, to which I must submit myself in all that is compatible with my other duties, which should never serve as a pretext to exempt myself from them.

A point I must be careful not to forget is the indispensable obligation to tend towards perfection. This reflection will lead me to acknowledge a whole lot of sins of omission. For to what a high degree of holiness does the apostolic vocation not bind, I mean to say, that vocation which dedicates me to work unstintingly at sanctifying souls with the means used by the Apostles? We have been specially instituted to convert souls and for many years God has shown us that we are proclaiming his mercies to sinners, such miracles has he worked through our ministry! This is the seal of his approval.

A second reflection, still considering the end of our Institute, will make me discover also my omissions, to my great shame. We have been called to replace as far as we can the different religious Orders that have been

swept away by the Revolution. To what perfection are we then called? To the perfection proper to each one of the suppressed Orders. It is not possible to seek perfection in a more comprehensive manner. This is the end of the Institute. How abashed I am for having understood it so badly! What a subject for my examination!

(Mss. Post. DM IV 3)

199 — To Father C. Aubert, Master of Novices, March 10, 1835.

I recommend Brother Kotterer to you in a very special way. Use the occasion of his retreat to instil the great principles of religious life, especially detachment, death to self, joyful obedience, complete devotedness to the Church and to the Society, giving support to his fellow-brothers, etc..

(Mss. Post.)

200 — Act of Visitation of N.D. de l'Osier, August 2, 1836.

I have one more very important recommendation to make. In the beginning of our establishment at Notre-Dame de l'Osier, our

Fathers believed that it was better not to manifest themselves in all the perfection of our Institute. We have never shared their opinion. No doubt they now realize that they were mistaken in wanting only to spare the sensitivity of their neighbours. This kind of too human policy could not succeed. Hence let our Fathers not fear any longer to appear as they are, namely true religious men, who are set apart from the world by their profession, devoted to the Church, concerned only to promote God's glory and the salvation of souls, without claiming any reward here on earth other than that promised by our divine Saviour to those who give up everything in order to follow him; in a word, men who have vowed to God that they would sanctify themselves through the strict practice of the evangelical counsels. Once this is understood, no one will be surprised at seeing our Fathers refuse to adopt the customs of the local priests who have not made profession to lead the same life of perfection. On the contrary, people would be scandalized to see them turn away, through misplaced complacency, from the principles of conduct that must guide them in all their activities. And we should not be

afraid that because of this strict severity we will drive away from our Institute those whom we would gladly see as joining us! We are confident that it will be otherwise, for who are those who usually wish to join any Congregation? Undoubtedly it is those who are looking for a more regular way of life, more perfect than the common lives of priests in parishes. If you behave in such a way as to be mistaken for them, then there is no more reason why they should make the least attempt to leave their family and their home, why they should sacrifice their comforts and freedom. This is evident. People can be drawn towards us by the good quality of our virtues, by the witness of our regularity, by our simplicity, our interior spirit, by our whole life which proclaims the habit and practice of that perfection to which aspire those whom God calls to give up the common way in order to offer themselves entirely to him. Hence let us be really what we ought to be, and we shall see that people will come to us.

(Copy. Post. DM IX 4)

201 — **Diary, February 27, 1837.**

Concerning religious who are dissatisfied in their own Order and think they can find perfection in another.

On this point, I would like to note that even at the Great Chartreuse, which is certainly the most regular community of the Order, in fact, the only truly regular one, there is a lot of misery. Some of it is even quite apparent. Some of the religious there reveal the stamp of their soul on their faces and in their conduct. Unfortunately, I wasn't the only one to notice all this...

God forbid that I mention these things to discredit an Order which in fact I respect. It is only so that certain people may realize that wherever we have human beings there we also meet all of humanity's miseries; and, often enough, to escape from the imperfections of those with whom we are living, we expose ourselves to even greater misfortune. I am not afraid to apply this to those among us who, while more imperfect than their brethren, nevertheless lay claim to an imaginary perfection to which they don't even come close, and who in their poorly disguised pride dare to criticize the

Institution itself when they are reproached for doing less well than those whom they would like to reform, or who in other instances, while paying tribute to the Rule, complain about those who observe it badly, imagining that they themselves are doing better than the others. Let them know that with a little bit of good sense and virtue, they could put everything right; and that by applying themselves to observing the Rules well and giving their share of the good example all have a right to expect from them, would soon realize that their Institute offers them as many and more means of salvation than many others do. And those who have travelled a little and seen others at close quarters would add that in their small family, despite the imperfections of some of its members, there is much less misery than there is elsewhere.

(Mss. Post.)

202 — **To Father Dandurand, August 11, 1843.**

Let all be intent on making our community very fervent. Fidelity to the Rules, exact discipline, charity, mutual support,

goodwill in doing promptly and willingly all that obedience demands, these are the virtues to practise which makes religion a true paradise on earth.

(Mss. Winnipeg)

203 — To Father Santoni, Master of Novices, March 16, 1846.

Keep repeating to the novices that by their consecration they give themselves to the Church without reservation, that they completely die to the world, to their families and to themselves; that they vow a perfect obedience by which they sacrifice unreservedly their own will so as to wish only what is prescribed by obedience; it is not only a question of obeying, but also in heart and spirit acquiescing with obedience, of being detached from places, things, even persons whom they should all love with the same charity; that they vow also voluntary poverty which obliges them to demand nothing, to be content with everything, to consider themselves blessed if something is wanting to them and if they suffer, as a result of holy poverty, privations and even destitution. Without this disposition, poverty is only a word void of

meaning. Chastity obliges them not only to avoid everything that is forbidden in this matter, but to preserve them from the least harm that could befall this beautiful virtue.

(Yenveux VIII, 67)

**204 — To Bishop Guigues, Provincial of
Canada, November 24, 1857.**

What can be said of a religious who does not follow a single point of the Rule, or of a priest who hardly says mass on Sundays and a few other days? Frankly, my dear friend, you should have let me know earlier of such a state of affairs, if you knew about it, and I cannot at all imagine that you would have been left ignorant of it. And now what are you going to do with this subject (Father Rouge)? I can imagine that you are embarrassed by him; but I doubt very much whether the retreat that he was to make in Montreal at the time when you wrote to me has done him the good that you seemed to expect. I hope it has, but this would be the sort of miracle that God does not often work for souls which have profited so little from the so abundant graces of their vocation. It is desolating that we have in the

Congregation subjects like him who are good for nothing but to neutralise the good done by others within, and to produce outside the Congregation a bad effect which it is very difficult to hide.

(*Reg. lettres 1855-1863, Post.*)

205 — **To Father Casimir Aubert**, February 8, 1858.

Let us firmly impress on everyone that we must be holy if we are to live the life of a saint, to accomplish the great work that God in his mercy has entrusted to us...

Father Chirouse, among others, doesn't seem to have any virtues of a religious. He is a jobber and nothing else. Father Chirouse's company derailed that other Father who wrote me that odd letter with which you are familiar. So how can we entrust missions to them? Missions require men of zeal and dedication, and, above all, men of God. We have reason to be sad when the salt has so lost its flavour.

(*Yenveux VII, 99; I, 124*)

FIDELITY TO THE RULES

206 — **To Father Tempier**, November 26, 1825.

On his arrival in Rome to ask for the Pope's approbation the Founder receives a letter from Father Tempier informing him of the defection of one Father and the departure of several novices from Aix. In this « very severe trial » he complained to the Lord, « as lovingly as he possibly could »; then he regained calm and wrote:

We ought to profit from it to become more perfect and more faithful to the observance of our Rules and the spirit of our Institute. Such is the conclusion I draw from all these woes which overwhelm us. Let them pay more attention than ever to the strict observance of the Rules. Keep a tight watch over that at Marseilles: things have never been as I have wanted. Cut out all that can be an obstacle in the way of regularity. Never mind if a little less is done exteriorly; there is much to gain from perfecting oneself. It is only by the exact observance of the Rules that one renders them familiar to oneself and that one becomes invariably attached to them.

(*Missions 1872, 173; Yenveux IV, 18*)

207 — **To Father Tempier, December 22, 1825.**

After the audience of December 20, during which Pope Leo XII had expressed his desire to approve the Rules and not just to praise them, the Founder exhorts his sons to a greater fidelity.

Let all of you redouble your fervour and exactitude for the observance of the Rules. You know that today they have taken on a more imperative character. Try to respond to the expectations of the supreme Head of the Church, this is the means to draw down upon us and upon our holy ministry new blessings.

(Missions 1872, 201)

208 — **To the Oblates, after the approbation of the Rules, February 18, 1826.**

The conclusion we ought to draw, dear friends and Brothers, is that we should strive, with fresh ardour and more complete devotedness, to add to God's glory as far as it lies in our power to do so, and by every possible means we should work for the salvation of our neighbour; heart and

soul, we should cling to our Rules, and practise with exactitude everything they prescribe. To do this thoroughly, we should all make our novitiate again, so that we would have ample time to meditate upon the entire content of our Rules. This is no trifle. They are no longer mere regulations, nor simply pious directions; they are Rules which the Church, after very careful examination, has approved. They have been proclaimed holy, and well fitted to lead to their proper end all those who undertake to observe them. They have become the property of the Church, for she has adopted them. In approving them, the Pope has become their guarantor, and the instrument God used for their composition no longer matters. It is evident now that he was but a mechanical instrument, set in motion by the Holy Spirit of God to show the way He wishes to be followed by those whom He has predestined and preordained to carry out His works of mercy by calling them to establish and maintain our poor, small and modest Society. We are few in number, apparently of little influence or importance, but we have our place in the Church as definitely as the most famous Institutes

and the most saintly Societies. We are then established; and I can now say to you privately what I shall say for all the world to hear when the brief has been issued. Recognize your dignity, and be very careful never to dishonour your Mother. She has been solemnly enthroned and accepted as a Queen in the household of her Spouse. His grace will make her fruitful, she will bring forth many children, provided that we are faithful and do not by our treachery bring upon her a shameful sterility. In the name of God, let us be saints.

(Missions 1952, 141-142)

209 — **Retreat Notes**, October 8, 1831.

A meditative reading of our Rules I have been doing during this retreat has filled my soul with admiration and brought me at the same time to several painful reflections which I cannot but record here.

What a shame it is to have within one's possession so perfect a code and not understand its meaning! Are there not among us some for whom this code is a sealed book? I would like to believe that there are none any more; it is enough however, that there

have been such for my reflection to be valid and to be taken into account. If everyone had known how to read what is in this book, we would not have to mourn the loss of many whom God will judge...

Let us, therefore, value these Rules as precious, let us ever keep them before our eyes, still more in our hearts; let us nourish our souls regularly with the principles contained in them, let us act, speak and think only in conformity with their spirit. It is only in this way that we can become what God expects of us and can become worthy of our sublime vocation...

Hence what matters is that we be imbued with the spirit of our Rules and, to arrive at this, we must make them the topic of our regular meditations. I became convinced of this during this retreat more than ever before. To make this practice easier for me, I think it useful to take out of the book of our Constitutions the articles that explicitly express why we have been established and what we should be. This will be my *vade mecum*, my treasure, from which I hope to derive great profit for my spiritual progress; others may also try this, if this little collection appeals to them. As for my-

self, realizing that everything that can bring about perfection on this earth is collected together in these few pages, and that our Constitutions present all these things as the prototype of the true Oblate of Mary, I rejoice in being called to such sublime perfection, without being frightened by the thought of my weakness, because I am full of confidence in the power of Him who always grants the grace to fulfil the commands he gives.

(Copy. Post. DM IV 3)

210 — **To Father Courtès, at Aix, November 4, 1831.**

Your last two letters, my dear Father Courtès, gave me the greatest pleasure. I am referring to those in which you give me an account of the dispositions of your community and especially of your own. The one I received after my retreat has given me that much more consolation because I had just made the most serious reflections precisely on what has affected you more. Perhaps never before have I better perceived the priceless value of the grace God has given

us and never before did I have such regard for the means he has provided us in the Congregation to serve him well and sanctify ourselves.

Those who will not profit thereby will be much at fault. I beg of you to tell all our Fathers the satisfaction I felt on reading what you said of them. I exhort them to read the Rules with as much attention as I have been doing; then they will perhaps be surprised to discover therein something they had never noticed there before. As far as I am concerned, here is a reflection I have recorded in my retreat notes. On meditating our Rules, I told myself that we would never be sufficiently grateful to God's kindness for having given them to us. God alone is unquestionably their author. He who wrote them recognizes nothing of himself in them; and thus it is with complete freedom that he judges them as he would an unknown book. But, how can I speak about judgment when the Church speaks through her Head! Here I take up the expressions used in Apostolic Letters. Then I base myself on the values given to all our works and activities, when they are all guided by the Rules, by the *sedulo servari praecipimus*

that emanates from the Head of the Church, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and on the *saluberrimi operis* and the *quibusdam legibus efformandis ad pietatem animis adeo opportunis*. I am no longer amazed at the *saluberrimi operis* when I consider that the end of our Institute is the same as the one our Saviour had in view when he came to this earth. I find, I do not know how many texts, which prove to me more and more the perfection of our Institute and the excellent means it gives us to walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and his Apostles. I could go on forever on this topic.

(*Yenveux IV, 15-16*)

211 — **To Father Courtès**, October 21, 1834.

My wish is that in retreat instructions, especially in the novitiate, the words of our Rules be textually quoted in order to become accustomed to the respect that everyone should have for them as well as to realize that this is the code which determines our duties.

(*Yenveux IV, 187*)

212 — To Father Perron, August 25, 1845.

Place your trust in the one in whose name you are sent and be assured that he will bless your obedience and will shower the most abundant graces on the works of your ministry... Before anything else, do your utmost to adhere to all our Rules and Constitutions prescribe. In the book where they are recorded, you have a sure and faithful counsellor whom you may consult at any time and whose advice will always help you to do what is most pleasing to God and most useful for yourself and for others.

(Yenveux VII, 160)

213 — Circular Letter, August 2, 1853.

The big job of reprinting our Rules, as approved once again by the Holy See, is finally done. I am sending you the copies to be distributed to each one of you. That is the code which the Church gives you so that, meditating upon it, you may make it the constant and ever valid norm of your conduct and thus perform the duties of your holy vocation. It is by this code that

you will be specially judged by Jesus Christ for reward or punishment.

I avail myself of this opportunity to add a few words of advice which it was not opportune to include in my circular letter printed at the beginning of the Rule-book, and which is its promulgation. There are certain things that must be said only person to person and within family circles. My entire hope is, my dearest sons, that this second promulgation of our Rules may arouse a fresh fervour in the heart of each one of you, that it may produce a kind of renewal of your youth, so that your virtues shining with greater light in the Church, may more greatly edify the faithful and contribute more to the conversion of sinners evangelized through your ministry.

Does this mean that you have been neglecting the duties of your holy state so as to make me anxious and to deserve severe reprimands from me? God forbid! No one knows better and appreciates more adequately than myself the virtues that are practised in our beloved Congregation, the zeal and devotedness that animate the majority of its members, and even the heroism of some who are well known to me. However it must

be admitted that even if the majority deserve praise and fill my heart with consolation, nevertheless, in these last few years, definite imperfections have appeared in some communities which we may not conceal as I today am addressing myself to the whole Congregation.

These imperfections, which we should not have to grieve over at the initial stages of what is, so to speak, a nascent Congregation, arise from several sources: 1) excess of external activities; 2) the small number of members in our communities; 3) the absence of local superiors, who themselves must be engaged in the ministry of the missions without always being able to have themselves replaced by men of sufficient authority; 4) the lack, we must admit, of courage in local superiors to require the strict observance of the Rules; 5) laxity of members who claim considerations which they could do without if they were fervent and better religious.

So it has come about that regularity is less observed, that there is much room for improvement regarding obedience, charity, poverty, mortification and other indispensable virtues. Of what use is a Rule if we are

not imbued with its spirit? if we do not practise what is prescribed?...

My dearest sons, for my part, I would like to summarize my advice in this one recommendation: Read and meditate upon the holy Rules; you will find in them the secret of your perfection; they contain all that will lead you to God. Adorn your souls with the finest virtues, amass merit and assure your perseverance. Read, meditate and observe your Rules, and you will become true saints, you will edify the Church, you will honour your calling and you will bring down the grace of conversion on those whom you will evangelize as well as all kinds of blessings on the Congregation, your Mother, and on her members who are your brothers. Read, meditate and faithfully observe your Rules, and you will die in the peace of the Lord, assured of the reward promised by God to those who will persevere to the end in the fulfilment of their duties.

(Copy. Post. DM IX 5)

214 — **Circular Letter**, February 2, 1857.

The blessings of God are manifested in the spread of the family and the fruits reaped by its members everywhere. We do not have sufficient men for the work there is to do. I have had to refuse several foundations both in France and in Amercia, and specifically three Vicariates Apostolic in Asia and in the New World, which the Holy Father, in his confidence, wanted to entrust to us.

So, my dear Sons, you can see from the few things I have just told you, what blessings the Lord is showering on our Congregation; at the same time, however, you cannot hide from yourselves what God asks in return for so many favours and what the Church expects of us.

Who can deny that to comply with so many graces of the Lord and with the expectations of the Church, we must become worthy of our vocation, that is to say, fulfil with the most scrupulous fidelity all the precepts and counsels contained in the sacred code the Church has given us to observe?

Thanks be to God, the majority of you have understood this. However — I say this

with grief — too many still leave much room for improvement regarding this matter. It is as though for them our Rules and Constitutions are a closed book which they have never opened or even understood. Their life may be compared to that of certain routine-rutted priests who do nothing in a spirit of faith and who stagnate in a habitual state of imperfection. Such priests scandalize the Church by their tepidity. But don't we have even greater scandal from those who, called to the religious life, that is, to a state of perfection, after having consecrated themselves to God by the vows of obedience, chastity and poverty, go from infidelity to infidelity in regard to these solemn promises and thus drag themselves shamefully along a rut of imperfections from which, it seems, they can no longer emerge? This deplorable misery which neutralizes any good they could do, or at least which deprives them much of the merit they could derive therefrom, is beyond comprehension; for they have in their Rules everything needed to keep them out of this misfortune or to help them come out of it.

(Copy. Post. DM II, 5)

215 — **To Brother Desbrousse, at N.D. de l'Osier, October 29, 1859.**

My dear son, my delay in answering your letter in which you tell me all about your holy oblation is certainly not due to indifference or forgetfulness. It is due to the numerous duties that take up all my time. Rather, I learned with delight that, faithful to your vocation, you have consecrated yourself to the good Master whom we serve and that you belong to the family of which I am the father. I rejoice at this and I congratulate you at the same time because I know all the benefits you will derive therefrom for your sanctification, as well as all the good you are called to do in the apostolic ministry you will perform in the Congregation. Be faithful to the exact observance of the Rules which you have learnt to know during your novitiate. These Rules are not meant only for novices; after leaving the novitiate, each must encourage the other to continue putting them into practice for the edification of all.

(Mss. Post.)

CHASTITY

216 — **To Brother Bernard, deacon, June 16, 1824.**

There is nothing simpler, more common, my dear friend, than to have temptations, to be wearied, even agitated, by detestable thoughts; the greatest saints have gone through these trials and all good men who still live on earth are exposed to this cruel persecution that the enemy of salvation wages even against the children of light. Should one therefore be surprised? Should it cause one to sink into sadness? Certainly not since it is not a right of Satan and all his lackeys to trouble our soul and cause it to lose the peace which the Holy Spirit who dwells in us has come to establish. Even if the body should feel the annoying impression or vehemence of these thoughts, or perhaps only the effect of the blood and its tempers, one must take care not to indulge in an examination which is ever dangerous. Your habitual disposition to love God, your constant will not to willingly offend him ought to suffice to reassure you fully. It is not so easy to turn away from him whom

one loves above all, when one lives by the life of grace, when from morning to evening, one tries to accomplish not only his commandments but his counsels, when one tries to make progress every day in perfection. Oh! no. It would be quite another thing if we were concerned with those men who live in forgetfulness of their duties, who lead a soft, useless life, who walk without fear of God, who have no love for him, who trouble themselves little about offending him; that would be different, but I repeat, he who like all of you lives only for God and does everything to please him, such a one, I will say it a thousand times, does not pass from this state to that of sin by surprise. No, my dear child, the Master whom we serve, who is the omnipotent God, does not permit that. He is there, with his grace, and as long as we do not expose ourselves voluntarily to the danger of losing it, he undertakes to preserve it in us.

(Yenveux VI, 15-16)

217 — **Circular Letter**, February 2, 1857.

What shall I say to you about the vow of chastity? That, to maintain this precious

virtue, faithfully observing all the Rules prescribe for making us men of God and true religious, is not too great a price. Do not forget what I here repeat:

Tota vita sodalium Societatis nostrae perpetua debet esse animi recollectio... Quod ut attingant, imprimis summopere curent jugiter coram Deo ambulare.

In addition, if we are not imbued with the spirit of mortification and penance; if, as the Saints have done from the time of the Apostles down to our own day, we do not apply ourselves to gain mastery over our flesh; we risk becoming the plaything of concupiscence *quae militat in membris vestris* (James 4:1), to use the words of the Apostle St. James. Consider also what the Rule prescribes on this point: *Quoniam uberes e ministerio suo fructus nunquam reportabunt evangelici operarii, nisi Christi mortificationem summo pretio habeant, illamque quasi jugiter in suo corpore circumferant, cupiditatibus coercendis...*

How can such formal precepts be reconciled with the behaviour of some who cannot impose any voluntary privations on themselves; who seek their ease and comfort in a state of life where anything other

than dying to self and to all inclinations of nature is out of the question; and who so easily find pretexts for exempting themselves from the penance special to our Rules — for they are not content with prescribing mortification in general, but go into detail with regard to this virtue: *itaque jejunabunt...* To indicate that the vow in the Rules is not restricted to this kind of mortification, without wanting to lay down precisions on the other bodily penances *quas corpori edomando aptissimas duxerunt omnes sancti*, the Rules point to the practice and the example of the Saints, while exhorting you to imitate them, *haec aemulentur sodales nostri*.

This had been understood right from the beginning and it was with alarm and grief that we learnt that some of our men, ignoring the spirit of our Institute and disregarding the Congregation's traditional practice regarding this matter, seem to relegate these salutary exercises of penance to the novitiate or to the scholasticate. A wretched blindness of sensuality prevents them from seeing that they have greater need for this preservative in the midst of the world they must struggle against, than those young

souls full of fervour, who serve God in seclusion and far removed from all danger.

(Orig. pp. 8-9. Post. DM IX 5)

POVERTY

218 — **To Father Tempier, November 16, 1819.**

Fathers Tempier and Mye start a difficult mission at Rognac. The Founder exhorts them to bear their situation of destitution and poverty.

God be praised, my dear friends and true apostles! My heart is afflicted by your situation but rejoices at the same time to see you sharing the fate of our first fathers, disciples of the Cross.

Oh! how right you seem to me upon your pile of straw and how much your fare, which is more than frugal, excites my appetite! This to my mind is the first time we have had what we should. Finish the work while accepting nothing from anyone without paying for it. For once you will not be disowned by our holy patron, Saint Liguori. I dare to speak to you in this way because I envy

your position and, were it only I who had to decide, I would share it. I beg you nonetheless not to deprive yourselves of what is necessary. Have you brought sugar with you? Father Mye, who has such a strong cold, will not be able to go without it.

(Rambert I, 304)

219 — **To Father Tempier, February 12, 1826.**

I think you are busy preparing the house, in case it should be decided to transfer the novitiate to Marseilles. I cannot too strongly recommend you to aim at simplicity and to keep within the limits of what is absolutely necessary. Here, I see very perfect examples of this. Is it really necessary that the novices have mattresses on their beds? Alas! should we have them ourselves? In preference to the mattresses, I should complete the furnishing with a stock of good, plain linen, bed sheets, napkins, towels, and kitchen cloths; as at Aix, we must do without tablecloths; then, some kitchen utensils, some books, and whatever is necessary for the chapel. After that, you must begin to refund the money which the Society has been sup-

plying for several years. It is important that we set aside something every year for the needs of our members, even if it were only to provide them with bread and something to wear, for I see the time coming when we shall get nothing from Digne and Gap, and what shall we do then? Whatever plans you are making, don't lose sight of this point.

(Missions 1872, 240-241)

220 — To Father Tempier, October 4, 1830.

The Founder is at Billens (Switzerland) with the scholastics: his presence is « profitable under many aspects, were it only to help them to become accustomed by my example to a few necessary privations ».

The wine is very bad in this country, and very expensive, and so the peasants don't drink it; they are only the better for it. We do not feel deprived; our situation is too much in harmony with poverty to allow regret. When the entire population among whom we live does not use a particular thing, regret would be unpardonable.

(Rambert I, 556)

221 — **To Father Mille, to the novices and scholastics of Billens, January 24, 1831.**

Tomorrow I celebrate the anniversary of the day when, sixteen years ago, I left my mother's home to take up my residence in the mission. Father Tempier had taken possession of it a few days earlier. Our quarters were not as splendid as the castle of Billens, and however destitute you may be, we were still worse off than that. My camp-bed was placed in the small passageway that leads to the library which was a big room serving as bed-room for Father Tempier and another who is no longer with us (1); it was also our community room. One lamp was our only illumination and when we had to go to bed, we placed it at the threshold of the door so that it could serve the three of us.

The table that adorned our refectory was some planks placed side by side on two old barrels. Never have we had the good fortune to be so poor since we made the vow to be so. We were thus taking the first steps, without suspecting it, to the perfect state

(1) Icard.

which we now live so imperfectly. But I purposely underline this kind of completely voluntary privation, for it would have been easy to end it and get whatever we needed transported over from my mother's place, to conclude therefrom that God was already then guiding us, even without our thinking about it yet, towards the evangelical counsels we were to profess later on. It was in observing them that we came to know their value. I can assure you that we lost none of our cheerfulness; on the contrary, since this new way of living was in striking contrast with what we had left behind, we often had a hearty laugh over it. I owed you this good remembrance of the holy anniversary of our first day of community life. How happy I would be to continue living it with you!

(Yenveux III, 21-22)

222 — To Father Lavigne, February 9, 1847.

The Bishop wrote to Father Lavigne who had presumed permission to lend his nephew 600 francs which he had taken from his family income.

You should have waited for my reply before taking this decision. The general rule

is that if we do not want to delude ourselves and not risk being poor only in name, we must forget that we possess anything and must not be engaged in administering our patrimony, which by the Constitutions is entrusted into other hands. Hence postpone any thought of a loan until I give you my decision.

(Yenveux III, 38)

**223 — To Father Gaudet, at N.D. de l'Osier,
April 5, 1847.**

Father Gaudet did not know how to cope with the large entry of novices sent by Father Léonard.

You should not be too easily downcast when you are the treasurer of a house that belongs to God. Divine Providence could be vexed, for it requires you to trust it. Providence has already given us so many proofs of its protection that we would be very ungrateful to forget it.

(Mss. Post.)

224 — **To Father Dassy**, December 7, 1847.

To revert to the article on finances, I am convinced that several of our Fathers, in fact, nearly all, do not understand anything about it. They are used to seeing the money come in when they need it and they haven't an idea of what it costs us. Furthermore they don't know how to do without anything and they imagine that perfection consists in never lacking anything. I agree that we should not lack what is necessary, but we must ration our needs to the resources that are available. It is true that you are accused of being too parsimonious; they pretend that you make the community die of hunger at la Blachère. Extremes must be avoided. I certainly do not approve pampering, but you must also avoid giving cause for grumbling by imposing excessive privations.

I can understand how annoyed you must be at the extravagant ways of good Father Mouchel. He is a bad treasurer in every sense of the term, and I have no intention of allowing him to continue in this post; but for the time being, who can replace him, with the difficulty your members have in your house?

The system he adopted of hastily spending money, in the absence of the superior, which he knew would not be approved by him, is abominable and totally opposed to the principles of obedience and poverty.

(Yenveux III, 6; VII, 192, 56)*

225 — **To Father Vincens**, December 14, 1847.

Providing for the needs of the families of our brothers is no small thing when these latter are already completely the Congregation's responsibility. This is especially so when some of our men who could help us are racking their brains to find some means of spending the little income which they could leave us so that we could provide for the food and needs of their brothers. For example, Father Lavigne has written to me asking for authorization to use his income for 1847 to purchase the mission cross in the area he is evangelizing. I granted him this authorization but, for the peace of my conscience, I told him it would be more in line with the spirit and virtue of poverty to forget he had an income and think no

more how he could use it, but rather what use of it is permissible.

(Yenveux III, 31)

**226 — To Father John Naughton in England,
May 1, 1848.**

Father Naughton may exercise his ministry outside the Congregation, but on certain conditions laid down by the Founder.

In view of the misfortunes of your family, I recognize the need to accord you the dispensations compatible with your vocation. I therefore consent that you accept an assignment from which you will draw remuneration in order to relieve the distress of your mother and sister. But note on what conditions I propose to leave you thus to yourself, detached from any community of ours.

1. I am most insistent that from time to time you betake yourself to one of our communities and so spend one or two days with your brothers and be able to receive direction from a superior.

2. That you render an exact accounting of the use you make of the money you are authorized to receive. You know that in vir-

tue of your vow of poverty you must not go beyond a certain level of moderation. Be content, in regard to your own person, with what you honestly need and see to the needs of your mother and sister without extravagance or excess. If a surplus remains of the revenue you receive, you should give an account thereof to the superior. The decision as to the use to be made of it will be given to you by him or by the Visitor General.

(Yenveux VIII, 320)

227 — **To Father E. Semeria at Jaffna, May 9, 1848.**

As regards financial resources, be sure that the missionary renders you an exact account and that he only keeps for himself what, in a spirit of poverty, he must have for his needs: the surplus, if there is any, must be sent to you so that you can begin forming a provincial fund which could help us, if no aid is forthcoming from the Propagation of the Faith, for sending subjects whom I would dearly love to associate with you, but whom I cannot send because I lack the means.

(Mss. Post.)

228 — **Circular Letter**, February 2, 1857.

Have we nothing to reproach ourselves with in regard to holy poverty, which, no more than obedience, cannot be a mere being of reason in our Congregation?... Is it not enough for Religious who have made the vow of poverty to be assured of the *victum* and the *vestitum* with which the Apostles were content? Does not divine Providence everywhere provide us, so to say, with a sheltering roof which is our home, whereas our divine Master and Model could claim that he himself did not even have a stone on which to lay his head? Who then could with justice complain when, due to circumstances, we may lack something either by way of clothes or food, a fact which can be noticed only by those who are supremely unmortified, because, thanks be to God, our houses provide everyone with what is strictly necessary? I have deliberately recalled these important points of the Rule, with the intention that we live in strict conformity with them in the future, not allowing anyone, under any pretext, to get himself clothes according to his taste.

The superiors will see to the needs of each one in perfect consistency, regarding the quantity or the quality, as it is mentioned in the directives accompanying my Circular Letter. On this point, I would add that the article of the Rules which tolerates silver cutlery and watches must not be extended any further, under any pretext, and I recommend to those who need to wear spectacles to be satisfied with steel frames, which is what lay people use.

(Orig. pp. 7-8; Post. DM IX 5)

229 — **To Father Bermond, Visitor in Oregon,**
December 20, 1858.

Establish a regular system of accounting, and teach them what you rightly say they know nothing about, to conduct their missions more economically. It is much to be desired also that certain of our Fathers conduct them in a manner more in conformity with the spirit that ought to animate a religious, keeping clear of everything that might have an air of commerce or industrial speculation. It is for you who are on the spot and have all authority to correct abuses and

to establish rules of conduct to set everything in order both in person and by writing.

(Copy. Reg. lettres 1855-1863, Post.)

230 — **To Bishop Semeria**, July 8, 1860.

You ask me for my authorisation for you to build a house. As a general rule you should have sent me the plans of the proposed building so that I could have examined and approved them. However, in view of the urgency of the matter on the one hand and the difficulty of communication on the other we shall forget this and I approve in advance all that you think it right to do, with the recommendation that you do things in such a way that you do not have to go over them a second time. You of course do not need luxury, but do not be miserly over the size of your common rooms, your inside chapel and your refectory. If your resources do not allow you to complete the whole of the building in one go, just finish a part of it in the first year and you can finish it later. But do have satisfactory plans that you have no regrets about.

(Mss. Post.)

OBEDIENCE

231 — To Father Bourrelrier, September 19, 1821.

He had expressed his feelings to the Founder, his « sorrow... at being useless » at N.D. du Laus.

Steep yourself more and more, my dear friend, in the grandeur and sublimity of your holy state; but never lose sight of the obligations which it imposes upon you. Read and reread our holy Rules, fully convince yourself that you are quite happy to belong entirely to Jesus Christ. No, my dear brother, you are no longer your own man in any way and you ought assuredly to congratulate yourself much about this. You know only too well the use, or rather say, abuse that you made of your freedom when you had no other master but yourself. Now it is Jesus Christ, our divine Saviour, who is your Master and he manifests his will to you through the Rule that you have embraced with love and through the voice of the superiors who stand in his place. Open the lives of the saints, you will see how they understood this truth and especially how they

put it into practice. It is them you ought to take as your models; with such examples one cannot go astray. Oh holy obedience! Sure road which leads to heaven, may I never deviate from the way you mark out for me, may I ever be docile to the least of your counsels! Yes, my dear brother, outside this path there is no salvation for us. But, thanks be to the goodness of God, you have already understood this and your letter allays the concern that was rightly aroused in me.

How much I could tell you about the grief you manifest about not being useful. What an error! Were obedience to put me at a door to open and close to those who come and go, I would consider myself very happy and I would believe, not without reason, that my salvation was more assured by this situation in which I was forced to be against my liking. One always does enough when one does only what obedience prescribes. It is only a matter of doing it well, not only exteriorly, but with heart and soul, and then one cannot be other than saved. So, my dear friend, cease to be grieved in the slightest on this subject.

(Yenveux III, 111-112)

232 — **To Father Jeancard**, September 26, 1829.

My dear friend, nothing is more normal than to make appropriate remarks, especially when they are addressed to a superior whose sentiments and style of doing things are well known. You knew that I am not one of those who are alien to all the idiosyncracies, I would even say, weakness of those under their charge; who see only the perfection of obedience in what they require of the latter; who never worry about anything except about that which has to be done. I have always tried to combine every concern which is compatible with good order in the Society and the welfare of souls. Thus, without approving your dislikes, I have always been careful to weigh them; and if they did not always prevail, they have nevertheless always been considered. It is — and we cannot but agree on this — too bad that you have not done better violence against them, especially as they affect several persons towards whom your prejudices are all equally unjust. That, however, is your particular shortcoming, the malaise of which you are not healed and about which I

reproach you, because I am convinced they are more deliberate than you think and are rooted in sentiments that are certainly not virtues. In any case, to please you I have changed our campaign plan: you will not go up to Dauphiné; Father Honorat will do this mission in your place; you yourself will remain at work in Languedoc until further orders.

(Yenveux III, 95-96)

233 — **To Father Jeancard, June 4, 1830.**

He has asked for a change of residence.

My dear Father Jeancard, I was delighted to hear that your little apostolic trip did not harm your health. I hope it also was quite profitable to your soul. If we understood our true interests, it would be the same in everything we do out of duty. Our greatest dislikes would make no greater impression on us than a dream, if we had the good sense not to nourish them with countless excuses which may indeed delude us but don't weigh an ounce in the scales of religion, the only ones employed by the archangel on Judgment Day. Let us therefore,

accomplish well and even willingly all that the Rules or obedience ask of us. Here on earth, we are the servants of God and of the Church. The common Father's steward cannot always employ us according to our tastes: he has a more pressing duty to perform, namely that of service itself. After all, what does it matter whether we do this or that, as long as we work for God in the field that is marked out for us by our superiors. Besides all these supernatural considerations, which do have some definite value, humanly speaking, we must be able to resign ourselves and make a virtue out of necessity. This is what everyone with common sense does. I have seen soldiers who would not have cared to go to Algiers, but they did go there as cheerfully as the others. The stay at Aix is not so scorching as that of Africa, and you risk no cannon fire there. Seriously speaking, the situation of someone kept there by duty is not one that easily arouses pity. Thus, dear friend, I want you to know that I cannot do otherwise than leave you there, to know how to busy yourself there in conformity with your vocation. Do not waste your time gaping about. Do some work, you have too many talents not

to be dreadfully responsible for an inactivity which I can never excuse. The small trip you have just made has given you sufficient relaxation. So get down to work as if you were in a hurry, and are we not so always in this short life, during this short space of time in which we must nevertheless perform our duties?

(Yenveux III, 92; IV, 232)

234 — To Father Mille, superior at Billens (Switzerland) and moderator of scholastics, April 21, 1832.

I would say a word to you, in passing, about your zealous activities during the Forty Hours. Do you know what conclusion I have drawn from your report? You have been as good a missionary as you have been a bad superior. Did you learn that the priests at Estavayer had abandoned their house — made up of priests and former religious — to go and preach as you have done? In conscience can a person give up his specific job in order to take up another, even if it were apparently better? What am I to say about the facility with which you inter-

pret the superior's intention in a way that is formally opposed to his precise words and to his well known intention, since he does have a definite intention. Ah! no, my dear man, this is not how you should behave. Always acting against its precepts is a wrong perception of obedience. We make noise, we are praised by others, we may even do some good, but we fail in our duty, and then what reward can we expect even from the most brilliant activities? It really hurts me to have to make these remarks to you but I weigh things according to the scale of God. On it, values are reduced to their simplest terms; that which carries weight on the world's scales often weighs nothing in God's: the latter has counter-weights of immense value. As a simple missionary, all that you have done would have been wonderful if that had been done out of obedience; but as a superior in charge of the élite of our family, whom you must care for as the apple of your eye, you have not done well; and those whom you have consulted have made the mistake, excusable in view of their age, of setting aside your personal obligations and considering only the matter at hand, prompted as they were by

the same zeal that you yourself have abused.

Once and for all, remind yourself that I did not send you to Switzerland to do outside ministry but to guide, instruct and constantly take care of the community entrusted to you; this has been repeated and explained far too often, for even the shadow of a doubt to subsist regarding the choice you must make when circumstances require it.

(Yenveux III, 156)

235 — **To Father Mille, superior at Billens,**
May 30, 1832.

Father Bernard's remarks did not seem out of place to me, if they had not exceeded the limit outlined in your letter. There is nothing more right than to make one's preferences known, but it is also quite in order to entrust these to the wisdom and the light the good Lord bestows on superiors. To entertain so exclusive a love for one section of the ministry, that one cannot be turned away from it, even for a short time without being upset, would be a great disorder. The superior cannot be tied down to conditions. He may need one of his men to open the gate or to sweep, and the latter ought to be

convinced that opening the gate or sweeping is more pleasing to God than preaching or hearing confessions on his own authority. Saint Anthony of Padua spent several years in the kitchen without dreaming of complaining. In serving the good Lord we need self surrender. Nothing is more common, alas! — I say it with trembling — than to come across very great sinners among preachers, confessors and all those ministers who have given in to the caprice of their will. Saints are found among the obedient who accept modestly their commitments under other conditions. In God's name, train yourself in this way of thinking. Whoever we may be we are useless servants in the Father's family household. Our actions, our service, have value only in so far as we do what the Master demands of us. Woe to the one who would disregard the smallest chores because he considers himself fit for higher things. He will soon be disillusioned. I say even more, he will soon change his allegiance from Jesus Christ to Lucifer. Accept this as based on my experience. I could quote more cases than I can count on my fingers.

(Yenveux III, 75-76)

236 — **Diary**, May 31, 1839.

Letter to Father Pélissier authorizing him to return to l'Osier. I made a few remarks to him about this way of acting at l'Osier. I expound the principles which he and some others had disregarded. It is erroneous to believe that by joining the Congregation we are obliged only to this or that thing: we are obliged to do everything obedience prescribes. Only what is sinful is contrary to our Institute.

Whatever is good, even if it is something outside the principal ends of the Congregation, comes within the domain of obedience. The superior has the right to require its accomplishment when he judges it opportune to do so. These principles are indisputable and people abide by them in all religious Orders and in all other Congregations.

(*Mss. Post*)

237 — **To Father Guigues**, October 23, 1839.

I persist in condemning the building you have put up without my authorization and against my wishes. Even if you had

succeeded in building a palace, I hold order a greater value than comfort, beauty or wealth. I will never consent to the local superior considering himself the master of the house over which he presides and acting against the spirit and letter of our Rules independently of the Superior General. I allow so many things to run their course which my successors will certainly not tolerate, and they will be right. You understand that it is my duty at least to protest when things are pushed too far.

(*Yenveux III*, 27)

238 — **To Father Lagier**, December 14, 1841.

Father Lagier, director of scholastics, had threatened to resign if the Superior General did not transfer a member against whom he was unreasonably prejudiced. Bishop de Mazenod narrates this fact in his *Diary* and adds: «Is this not an outstanding director for teaching others the obligations of holy obedience?».

To inform me of what you knew, to disclose your way of thinking to me, is good, it is even your duty. However my dear

Father, you should have allowed me to judge a case regarding which your only role is to inform. Giving a verdict as you did before knowing what I would decide is such a bad example that I would never have believed that you could possibly venture to do it. What would become of us if each one in turn wanted to impose his way of thinking on the superior? In what Society is a person allowed to address one's superior in these words: if you do not do what I maintain, I shall be forced to go away with my other brothers and return my powers to you, etc.?

My dear Father, I recall your own words to you so that you could judge them for yourself. You would have vacated the post assigned to you by obedience! and you would have allowed yourself to be accompanied by those whom you are to instruct in the duties of this obedience, which has been shattered, trampled underfoot, annihilated by this wicked phrase which expresses thinking that is destructive of all order! May God save me from believing that you could have carried out such a threat. It escaped you in your anxiety and you will have undoubtedly retracted it, especially if it was heard by

those who expect from you good guidance and example in all that makes up a religious person.

(Yenveux III, 121)

239 — To Father Honorati, in Canada, October 20, 1844.

Who can tell what good will be effected by the ministry of our people now that union and charity reign amongst them and now that simple, frank and prompt obedience will settle all matters and rule all minds; for that is the decisive point, to know how to renounce one's own ideas and submit one's judgement to the directions which are intimated to us on behalf of God. I know this rule of conduct, the only legitimate one, should have been followed from the beginning; for that, one would have had to be more advanced than was the case in the virtues proper to the holy state that had been adopted, to live a life of faith which tells one that God is in one's superior, no matter who he is, even believing oneself to be better endowed with wit and wisdom than him.

(Yenveux IV, 20)

240 — **To Father Guigues, in Canada, May 22, 1848.**

I broach with extreme repugnance the subject of the conduct of our men in Canada. Too long have my mind and heart been wearied thereby. Several times already I have been on the point of taking a severe decision, for it is not tolerable. They are too prone to argue and not enough to obey as conscience demands. Since when must a superior have all the qualities and virtues there are in order to be respected? What authority have the subjects in a community to control his actions, measure his worth and bear judgement on his ability, his experience? When he is punctual and observant of the Rules, has competent knowledge and enjoys the confidence of the Superior General, what more must be asked of him? Is it not moreover a singular thing that outsiders judge the worth of our members? All they should know about them is whatever is external such as their preaching but their personal qualities, their aptitude more or less to be at the head of a community, should be unknown to them. They could not be in a position to judge such matters

except through indiscretions which are most culpable...

You have built, I am told, a new wing to your house at Longueuil. Who has thought to breathe a word to me about this? It is imperative to regularize relations which go to strengthen more than you think the unity which must reign in all Congregations and the bonds of our fraternity.

(Yenveux III, 66; VII, 122)

241 — **To Father Viala, June 21, 1848.**

In God's name, my dear Father, be calm and help yourself thereto with some supernatural thinking. What should we seek on this earth? to do God's will. The secret of our happiness lies in conforming our will with his; if our will is cantankerous, we risk losing the merit of our obedience; at least we deprive ourselves of the consolations that always accompany our submission. Reflect that several of our brothers have given up everything and crossed the seas to obey this divine will which was manifested to them through the very superiors who are keeping you in your present post.

Those among them who sleep on snow, who drag themselves over ice, who have nothing but a little bread for their food, and on lucky days, a piece of fat to rub on it, do not complain about their lot, and they entrust their health — as all of us have done and all of us should do — to God's Providence who rules us. So, my dear Father, be patient, do not ask for the impossible, have confidence in our good Father for whose sake we have sacrificed everything on this earth, even our life. Do not doubt that he will come to your aid, that he will give you back your health and your peace of soul, on condition that you live in holy indifference, a quality which assures the happiness of a good religious. You will meet Father Aubert on his way to Limoges, talk to him about everything that concerns the good of the community and that concerns you personally. For now, attend to regaining your health and continue doing the good work you have begun to do so well. Try to overcome the little dislikes and vexations that all of us meet in our lives; be worthy of yourself and your vocation and believe me, it costs me very much to contradict you, but I appeal

to your heart and to your piety. Farewell,
I greet you very affectionately.

(Yenveux III, 93)

242 — **To Father Honorat, in Canada, July
12, 1849.**

You well need that I be able to extend my visitation as far as Canada. It is there and not in France that they have lost the very notion of the religious spirit. It has reached the stage where I can no longer recognize my work. It was never my idea to make a gift to the Church of a society of in-subordinate priests, without deference or respect for their superiors, detractors of each other, grumblers, void of the spirit of obedience, each reserving the right to judge according to his prejudices, his tastes or his repugnances, sparing no one, not only amongst themselves but even before strangers whom they carelessly take into their confidence about the woes they have but would not have if they tried to understand what a religious should be. Hence the miserable opinion that has been formed of the Congregation which however, thank God, does not resemble her contingent in Canada.

The wound must be quite deep and the illness quite chronic if all the recruits I send and who leave full of goodwill soon become as imperfect as the others. I am sickened to the depths of my soul. I hope nevertheless that by the mercy of God the means He inspires me to take will remedy the evil I deplore. I am going to send a Visitor extraordinary with full powers. I am nonetheless, my very dear, believe me, yours very affectionately.

(Yenveux III, 93)

243 — **To Father Nicolas, March 25, 1850.**

The letter you forwarded to me caused me more grief than satisfaction. First of all, it is absolutely impossible for us to start a new establishment at this time. I do not have the men available, and once I will have them, I shall have to strengthen the houses already established, which are in need. Furthermore, this letter is not that of a good religious; everything appears therein except virtue. That Father should not have tolerated people to speak in such manner in order to show him friendship. When one wants

to found a religious establishment in God's Church, one should not be inspired by such a spirit. Manifesting the desire to withdraw from obeying a superior who admittedly is not sympathetic to you and to go to live with a friend you seem to love in the manner of passionate wordliness, once again I say, there is not even the shadow of virtue in all this, and God will not bless plans conceived with such an attitude. We must be prompted by other considerations if we want to cooperate in extending the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

(Yenveux VII, 32)

244 — **To Father J. F. Arnoux, in England,**
January 24, 1852.

Now I recommend that you draw closer to the vice-provincial to help him in his difficult task. Antipathy to this good Father can be left to members who are as imperfect as Fr. Walsh. I myself esteem him highly and this attitude is shared by all our Fathers. Moreover, I beg all the members of our Congregation to desist from placing obstacles in the way of measures which I

believe, before God, I must take... obstacles designed to deter me from carrying out my plans. I myself do not have any bias, and I know the value of each man sufficiently well to place him according to the needs. Our Congregation is not a republic, it is not even a representative government. We must study the chapter on obedience a little better and live in peace under the direction of those who are charged by the major authority with the government of communities and provinces. If Father Cooke, as vice-provincial, is not doing all the good that he could do and that I expect from his zeal and good spirit, it is not him whom I will hold responsible but rather those whose duty it is to support him with all their might.

(Yenveux III, 103)

245 — To Father Médevielle, at N.D. de l'Osier, January 3, 1859.

My dear Father, I could not reply better to the question you have asked me in your letter that I have just received than by telling you that you have just been approved to make your vows on the second of next

month. Do not worry about what you can or cannot do. It will suffice that you proceed in the name of obedience. You will preach when you have to preach, hear confessions when you have to do so, on missions or elsewhere. Rest well assured that nothing beyond your strength will be required of you, and it will happen more than once that, even though not bound to do so, you will be consulted about your likes and special inclination. I would only wish you would entertain a higher idea of the great privilege and valuable benefits of the religious life. You ought to consider your vocation to this holy state as the greatest gift God has given you in his goodness. And on the eve, as if it were, of attaining this happiness, I would like to see you engaged in thanking the good Lord, who has not given this great favour to many others, rather than unnecessarily worrying about what may never happen. Therefore, go ahead, my dear Father Médevielle, without looking back. Remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ; they will help you to persevere on the road to which you have been called: *Nemo mittens manum suam ad aratrum et*

respiciens retro, aptus est regno Dei (Lk. 9:62).

(*Mss. Post*)

PERSEVERANCE

246 — **To Bishop Arbaud of Gap, August 13, 1826.**

Our vows are as perpetual as the most solemn vows in the world. When we made the vow of perseverance we intended to oblige ourselves to live and die in the Congregation that has accepted our commitment. It is not up to the individual to operate according to his schemes and whims, much less to foresee a possible case of dispensation. Such a thing would not be permissible before the profession and it is absolutely impossible afterwards.

In our Congregation, dispensation is considered so great a disaster that we like to think there will never be any such case, now that we have been approved by the Church and have been placed in the same rank as the Lazarists, Passionists and the Redemptorists.

(*Yenveux VIII, 254*)

247 — **To Father Martin, at Billens, January 9, 1837.**

In the midst of the consolations I experience at the sight of the good done by our small group, I have the grief of seeing the devil screening us, and that among the grain shaken in the sieve there are some kernels that are lean and shrivelled enough to pass through and thus be removed from the threshing floor of the common Father. What disastrous illusions there are in this matter! I will protest before all men and before God against these apostasies till my last breath and beyond, for it is before the judgment seat of God that I summon all those who are guilty of it.

One should listen to Saint Liguori on this subject; I have his Memoirs before my eyes to console and strengthen me. What is even more sad is that God is offended and even grievously offended, and yet the persons concerned are so blind as to remain calm and without any remorse, in a habitual state of resistance to their essential duties.

Regarding the subject of temptations against one's vocation: if we would take the trouble of consulting theology, we would

know how we delude ourselves when we imagine we can live without sin while deliberately entertaining thoughts and plans contrary to the state to which we have committed ourselves by vow. Dwelling deliberately on thoughts and desires against the vows we have made is no more permissible than dwelling on thoughts and desires against the love of God and against the sixth commandment.

Let us convince ourselves, says Blessed Liguori, that temptations against vocation are the most dangerous that the devil can inflict on us; this is because of the ensuing consequences; let everyone, therefore, daily pray for perseverance in his vocation during the visit to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin.

We are seriously mistaken if we excuse ourselves for these kinds of thoughts under the pretext that a dispensation is possible. We should know that these dispensations can free the individual in conscience only when there are serious reasons which did not exist at the time of profession and which the person concerned did not foresee, which appear all of a sudden and make it impossible for him to fulfil his commit-

ments. Even in such a case, the person concerned should accept the dispensation only with regret and with the sincere desire of removing the obstacle preventing him from remaining in the Congregation to which he had committed himself. The presumption is that this obstacle is quite independent of his will.

When the Supreme Pontiff dispenses a religious from his vows, he presupposes that such reasons do exist and he leaves it to the conscience of the individual to judge how far they are valid. In these dispensations, Rome is concerned above all with freeing Congregations from members who no longer belong to them at heart; for everything else, it abandons them to their conscience. But if the religious had, through his own fault, placed himself in a situation of dismissal, he remains nonetheless responsible before God for violating obligations from which his culpable behaviour had made the dispensation necessary.

The power of dispensing from vows is a two-edged sword which usually kills the individual in order to save the family. All the members of our Congregation who have been dispensed to date are, in a very true

sense, real apostates, because there is not a single one of them who had valid reasons to offer and because they were separated from the Congregation only because they had put themselves into such a situation that they had to be expelled. This is an enormous fault for which they will be responsible as long as they have not taken effective means to atone for it.

The Rules are a burden, they say. But today's Rule is the same that the religious knew during the novitiate and which he had undertaken to observe. Is this really a reason to offer? Let the religious ponder whether he would dare to offer this reason before the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge. Simple Christians could say as much regarding the precepts of the Church or even for the ten Commandments. But this has always been the pretext used by all lax religious, by every apostate. If this religious were to be more faithful, he would experience the truth of the Saviour's words: *Jugum meum suave est et onus meum leve!* (Mt. 11:30).

There are some religious who dare to say that they had made their oblation only with the idea of quitting the Congregation some day. What a horror! Let them study

theology. They will learn that it is not allowed to place any condition, any mental restriction in making vows, and the formula of oblation pronounced verbally must be made seriously and from the bottom of the heart. Otherwise, it would only be a lie, hypocrisy, the profanation of a holy and religious act.

Are we allowed to play games with God and with people, to consider an act made in the presence of Jesus Christ at the holy altar as only a vain and laughable ceremony? Would there be anything sacred on this earth, if vows, oaths made before Jesus Christ, and accepted by the Church in his name, do not express what they signify? I cannot make head or tail of this!

Some say that they could do more good elsewhere. What is culpable in these plans is disguised under this pretext. But how long will we have eyes and not see? Priests who are free are looking for religious communities because they realize that all their effort of zeal, done alone and in isolation, bear no results; and those who are fortunate to live in a Congregation would like to get out of it to do more good? We see priests coming to us, who leave the world with the

idea of sanctifying themselves by working for the salvation of others; they give up this freedom which others value so much, but which all the saints considered as quite dangerous; and those who are so greatly fortunate to be incorporated into a Congregation, which supplements for their weakness, would entertain the culpable thought of regarding the bonds they have already broken? This is what I cannot understand. The cause of all these criminal thoughts and restlessness cannot be so well hidden that it cannot be perceived. It is because a person thinks he is someone great that he imagines he has the means to success; it is because he has allowed himself to be enticed by exaggerated praise that he relies on himself and wants to be more free to act in his way, to assert his talents, always under the pretext of working for God's glory. Someone who finds himself restricted, vexed by obedience, does everything possible to find a situation where he can develop himself and does not realize that this is a trap of self-love. In such a frame of mind, that person will no more abide by the superior's decision, will no longer listen to his advice, and will want to consult outsiders and go on consulting

them until he finds someone who agrees with him, and that is the one who is right; selfishness and the passionate desire to do one's own will drive a person to this extreme.

(Yenveux VIII, 259, 262, 266, 282)

V. THE LIFE OF FAITH AND OF PRAYER

UNITY OF LIFE

248 — **Retreat of Bonnevaïne, near Marseilles, July 1816.**

Obliged to take a rest by his companions and the doctor, the Founder wishes to profit by this « means of salvation » provided by Providence, to make a serious retreat.

I am going to try and profit from it by seriously examining my interior life. The work I am forced to do prevents me, truly leaves me no time to think about myself when I am in the city or am giving a mission. What happens then? I become daily more miserable and, having never been endowed with many virtues, I am left in rags.

This is distressing. Since I am destined ceaselessly to work for the salvation of

others, and my office puts me in continual contact with everyone, if I do not have the talent, or better, if the good Lord does not give me the grace of growing in virtue in the midst of this tumult of tasks and of sanctifying myself on the run, I am to be pitied and certainly quite badly off in my situation...

But I cannot root out of my mind, much less from my heart, that, wanting to promote God's glory and the salvation of souls which He has redeemed by his blood, by every means in my power, even if I have to sacrifice my life — I cannot believe that this good Master will pardon me nothing especially when I consider that my faults are precisely due to the fact that I am engaged, it seems to me according to his will, in the service of his glory and the salvation of others.

Is all this an illusion? is it rashness? I do not know. I am writing what I think, without ostentation, without affectation, with the desire, nevertheless, of working with all my energies to correct myself and to live better in the future. The good Lord knows that I need this confidence to act; apparently this is why he grants it to me...

The youth establishment and that of the mission had to be done by me because the good Lord had placed me in a position suitable for this; but how much better things would have turned out had I put in less of myself, had I been more docile to the internal voice of God, had I worked more for my own perfection, at least by availing myself of all that perhaps distracts me, knowing my fickleness and dissipation, to advance rather than slide back. I must achieve this with God's grace.

Above all, I must really convince myself that I am doing God's will in devoting myself to the service of my neighbour, in doing things that are external to our house, etc., and then do my best without worrying if, by so working, I cannot do other things for which I may perhaps have an inclination or which seem to be directly concerned with my own sanctification. If for example, at a time when I would be inclined to contemplate the mercies of Jesus Christ in his sacrament, I am called to hear confessions, I must leave our Lord without murmuring or without regret, in order to fulfil the duty of charity laid on me by his will.

Or again, even if I am tired in body and in

spirit and want to get some rest in good reading or in prayer, etc., and the operation of the house obliges me to go and make odious trips or tiresome visits, then, convinced that I must give preference to what God asks over what I myself might desire, etc., I will not hesitate and I will do it most willingly, so that, supposing I did have a choice, I would prefer what is required by the service God has entrusted to me to what may please me more. Better still, I will try to love what is more in conformity with the Master's will, which alone must direct not only my actions but also my desires.

If I achieve this, everything is won...

I must convince myself that God uses men for his works, but he does not need them. Thus I would much more promote the things whose direction he deigns to entrust to me by living infinitely more in dependence on him and by being less worried about success. A little more prayer, much less anxiety and calculation.

According to this reflection, I take the resolution to arrange matters in such a way that I do more oraison than I have done hitherto. It is in that context that I must get used to dealing with my affairs and those

of our community, of our youth, etc..

Besides the one in the morning, done in common with the others, as far as possible I shall steal a few moments after dinner to resume this exercise before the Blessed Sacrament...

Since I am usually disturbed and it is very often impossible for me, despite the best of intentions, to do at the prescribed time certain exercises from which I am sometimes obliged to exempt myself, much to my regret, I must find the means to supplement and to avoid this lack. There is no other way, I think, than always acting in perfect dependence on God's will, in perfect freedom of spirit, in union with God, by an interior attitude of adherence to what it may please him to command at each given moment, being convinced that that is what he wants me to do and not something else.

If I act with these sentiments, then work that leads me elsewhere or annoys me, will be more meritorious than what I would have preferred to do.

An essential rule: to raise my heart to God before, during and after the deed, act always in a spirit of faith.

(Copy. Post.)

249 — **Retreat, May 1818.**

After re-reading the notes of July 1816, and acknowledging that he had followed imperfectly the resolutions then made, Father de Mazenod continues:

God forbid that I even wish to give up serving my neighbour! Far from it! so much so I would like, if it were possible, to do still more than what I have done thus far. The Lord is undoubtedly glorified by this, since this is precisely the way that is more pleasing to him. I shall be more prudent, however, and while serving my neighbour, I shall not neglect myself as I have been doing; I shall not convince myself as easily as I have done that the charity towards neighbour can substitute for everything, can serve for meditation, preparation, thanksgiving, visit to the Blessed Sacrament, prayer, etc. This is an exaggeration which has cast me into the condition I recognized yesterday. It will not be difficult to correct: God knows that if I give myself to external works, it is more through duty than personal taste, it is to be obedient to what I think the Master demands of me; this is so true that I do it always with great internal repugnance. If I

would follow my own taste, I would be concerned only about myself and be content with simply praying for others. But who am I to have a will of my own in this matter? It belongs to the Father of the family to allot the kind of work which he wants his labourers to do. They are always only too honoured and fortunate to have been chosen to cultivate his vineyard.

The essential thing is to arrange things in such a way that nothing suffers, and that in serving my neighbour I do not neglect myself to the point of becoming lukewarm.

(Ms. Post. DM IV 3)

PERSONAL RENEWAL

250 — **To Father Honorat**, February 9, 1824.

Because of his consuming and sometimes ill-timed zeal, he was often admonished by the Founder in this matter:

After a mission, it is good to spend several days in a regular community.

(Yenveux I, 10)*

251 — To Father Marcou, April 12, 1824.

People are urging the missionary to remain longer in the place he had just evangelized.

You must not remain long in that place and must say in advance, very mildly but in a manner as to be understood, that on coming from a mission as tiring as the one that you have just preached, you need rest and recollection... After one and especially two missions, you must feel the need to be recollected and to think a little of yourself.

(Yenveux I, 1)*

252 — To Father Honorat, March 13, 1827.

Regarding the Congregation of which you speak to me, I approve that you take care of it, but it is an abuse not to be master of yourself. It is good that people come to the house for confessions, but that they come at all hours, and they remain there especially during our recreations, that may not be. We would never be recollected, never be free. Oh no! no more of this subjugation; we have recognized an abuse, let us not fall into it any more.

(Yenveux I, 4; V. 196)*

253 — **Act of Visitation of N.D. du Laus,**
June 22, 1828.

Strongly convinced that the sanctification of our Society's members and the success of their work depend on their fidelity in observing exactly the holy Rules of our Institute, we recommend forthwith to all our Fathers who belong to the community of our house at Notre-Dame du Laus, to imbue themselves ever more with the spirit of our Rules and not to depart too easily from the very letter of these Rules, which we would be misinterpreting by straying from it. Rather, let them clearly accept that, after having worked hard for a great part of the year in giving holy missions or retreats in the various parishes of the diocese, it is more than necessary that they return with holy fervour, to recollect themselves in the privacy of God's house in order to renew and prepare themselves for fresh combat, by strictly observing all that is prescribed by the Rules to attain the desired goal...

We insist on this essential point because the situation of this house daily exposes our priests to the danger of dissipation and of

loss of the spirit of recollection without which one can never make the least progress in religious virtues.

The large crowd of pilgrims on the one hand, and the frequent visits of a great number of priests of the diocese and of the neighbouring dioceses on the other, are the two reefs we point out to our Fathers.

To avoid being shipwrecked on them, our Fathers must be armed with sustained zeal for observing the Rules, and for their own sanctification. They must convince themselves that they can achieve results only through this means.

(Copy. Post. DM IX 4)

254 — **Retreat Notes**, October 8, 1831.

The second and the third chapters (of the second part of the Rules) contain principles that must be meditated. It is only thus that we can understand what an Oblate of Mary should be. It must be added to what we have taken out of the first part and the preface to the Rules.

Tota vita sodalium Societatis nostrae, perpetua debet esse animi recollectio, etc...

Let us pay close attention to the *Nota*

bene of para. 1 of the second chapter. It does not say: If anyone finds these Rules too difficult, he will be dispensed from them, they will be mitigated considering his weakness. Far from it! The Rules insist; they explain their apparent strictness, they motivate it by means of decisive reasons, they urge the law, because, in truth, no compromise is possible in regard to one's duty. « *Si quis* », the Rules says, « *si quis istas et sequentes regulas, etc...* ».

(*Mss. Post. DM IV 3*)

**255 — To Father Guigues, superior at N.D.
de l'Osier, May 27, 1835.**

I am sorry that you are overloading yourself with work. I do not approve of this at all: it has the double disadvantage of exhausting your men and of keeping them too long outside the house. It is absolutely contrary to the Rules to be continually giving this service outside...

In God's name, let them return to their communities to renew themselves in the spirit of their vocation; otherwise it is the end of our missionaries, they will soon be nothing more than sounding cymbals.

The responsibility lies with you, my duty is to warn you about it. Insist very much on the exact observance of the Rules; among other things, give the theological conference, remember that it is compulsory.

(*Yenveux IV, 19*)

256 — To Father Honorat, in Canada, March 26, 1842.

Do not let yourselves be overwhelmed by the work which will soon surpass your strength. One must never want to do more than God permits. Plan all things wisely. Above all, always reserve time for study and for your personal sanctification in the interior of your house. That is indispensable.

(*Rambert II, 107*)

257 — To Father Honorat, in Canada, April 20, 1844.

You see that you can be called upon to found establishments at any time at all, that is, to be placed in a conspicuous position where strangers can see the worth of your virtues: *ut videant opera vestra bona.*

What do I intend by this reflection? It is that you must be worthy of your vocation, truly apostolic men devoted to the service of the Church, fully zealous for the salvation of souls and above all, saintly as regards yourselves and your brothers. This degree of perfection is the normal state of the missionary. Fidelity to your rule is sufficient to bring you to this state and maintain yourselves in it. I perceive that in the beginning, the excessive work with which you were burdened may have been hurtful to your interior recollection and have occasioned, I would say, almost a kind of evaporation of the gifts of God that you should nourish assiduously within you, but today you would be inexcusable if, numerous as you are, you did not save the time that the Rule prescribes for the intervals of respite between missions.

(Yenveux I, 110)*

258 — To Father Berne, at the Major Seminary of Fréjus, September 8, 1852.

You ask me if, because of your work, it would suffice for you to do twenty minutes

of spiritual reading and a few chapters of Holy Scripture which you often have to peruse because of what you need for your studies. I reply, first of all regarding the spiritual reading, with an observation which must not be lost sight of, namely that spiritual reading is necessary nourishment for the piety of a studious person, who is led thereby to the practice of virtues which we easily tend to neglect when we are absorbed by scientific research. On this supposition and being resolved never to neglect this duty, I willingly consent to your reducing from half an hour to twenty minutes the time you will spend on it. I may say the same for the reading of Holy Scripture, since the kind of studies you are involved in obliges you often to explore this rich mine.

(Mss. Post)

259 — **To Father Arnoux, superior at Inchicore, Ireland, July 30, 1858.**

I have learnt with interest about the personnel of your house. All the persons who make it up interest me and here and now

I express all my affection for them. I admire the zeal of dear Father Fox but I think he is wrong not to save some hours for study. That is to say, I am of your opinion. Were you to confess 48 hours a day, you still could not cope with all the demands. Anyway there has to be a limit to the exercise of zeal. It is more than enough during a mission to be entirely at the service of the people but within the precincts of our dwelling, all needs must be cared for — whatever concerns the missionary personally must not be neglected. As for the good Father Egan, it is all right for him not to preach if they cannot hear him, but not to confess, that is a little too much. This is a ministry that can be exercised at an age much more advanced than his.

It is too much to give four instructions in the retreats that you give to sisters. Why accustom them to such a programme? You end up by exhausting yourself without good reason.

(Mss. Post)

EUCCHARIST (1)

260 — **To Father Mille and to the scholastics of Billens, November 17, 1830.**

After his sojourn at Billens, the Founder is on his way back. He writes from Geneva:

My dear children, here I am two days away from you, and each day separates me more and more from my cherished family; all of you are present to me, the way you are, and I busy myself willingly before God on your behalf! It is there that I have my rendez-vous with you. Speak about me often to this common Father, who is with his divine Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the centre of all our hearts; let us love him, let us love one another in him more and more.

(*Yenveux V, 177*)

(1) On this topic, cfr.:

- F. CIARDI, *L'eucharistie dans l'action pastorale du bienheureux de Mazenod*, in *Vie Oblate Life*, t. 38(1979), pp. 39-50.
- Idem, *The Eucharist in the life and thoughts of E. de Mazenod*, *ibid.*, pp. 201-231.

261 — **To the community of Billens, November 1, 1831.**

On the last day of the annual retreat, after the Eucharistic celebration offered for those absent (Billens) and present:

Let us often be together as now, in Jesus Christ, our common centre in whom all our hearts converge and all our affections are perfected. My very dear ones, this is my banquet on this beautiful feast day.

(Yenveux IV, 181)

262. — **Diary, June 2, 1837.**

Taking possession of N.D. de Lumières.

Today is the beautiful feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and I did not want to let it pass by without consecrating to him this house, our institution and the community that is to serve the shrine and carry out the ministry of missions in the diocese. In vain I waited until now for the two missionaries whom I had called from Notre-Dame du Laus. I am disappointed by this delay because I wanted to form the little community today. This disappointment did not hinder

me, on this beautiful day, from performing the ceremony I had decided upon. Thus on returning from our visit from the ruined chapel of the Archangel Saint Michael, Father Tempier, Father Honorat and myself, put on our choir dress, and alone in this big church, with our porter Xavier Grangier and his wife as our only witnesses, devoutly exposed the Blessed Sacrament that was kept in the ciborium, on the altar and sang the *Ave verum*. Then we remained in prayer for half an hour. I think these were precious moments. We were all alone in the presence of our divine Master, but we prostrated ourselves at his feet and placed our persons, our Institute, its ministry, its activities and the house of which we had just taken possession, under his powerful protection; we asked him to reign singularly over us, to be our father, our light, our help, our guardian, our support, our everything. We invoked his blessings on ourselves and on our Congregation which we represented with as much fervour as we were small in number. For my part, I added to all these thoughts a deep sentiment of my unworthiness, penetrated as I was to the bottom of my soul with the idea that my sins have made me es-

entially incapable of being the instrument of all the marvels the Lord is operating for our members and through them, since the humble beginnings of our small family until now. This house which I placed at that moment in a special manner under the protection of our supreme Master and Saviour was already our Congregation's tenth establishment.

(Mss. Post)

263 — To Father Pierre Aubert, at Saint-Boniface, February 3, 1847.

I must say that it happens sometimes when I find myself in the presence of Jesus Christ that I experience a kind of illusion. It seems to me that you are adoring Him and praying at the same time as I and with Him being as present to you as to me, we feel as if we were close to one another although not able to see each other. There is something very true in this idea. I revert to it constantly and cannot describe the good and the consolation I derive from this. Try to do the same and you will experience it as I do.

(Mss. Post)

264 — Act of Visitation of the Province of England, July 22, 1850.

Whatever your occupations may be, never fail to make your morning and evening meditations, never abstain from saying your Mass, whatever pretext may present itself: the wrong you would do to yourself and to the Church, the glory which you would withhold from God, and all the other reasons which you know, and which it is useless for me to adduce here, oblige me to make this a duty of conscience for you. To act otherwise, would be to depart entirely from the spirit of our Institute, and from what has been constantly practised in it. I might cite the example of all our Fathers before us, who have never yielded in the greatest difficulties, nor in the most painful privations, to the temptation of depriving themselves of the happiness of celebrating the Holy Sacrifice. I content myself with transcribing the words of the Rule: « Everyday they must be careful to celebrate the most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; and if, during a journey, when several Missionaries travel together, there is no possibility of all saying Mass, but if all cannot possibly celebrate,

one at least shall enjoy this privilege, the others communicating within that Mass; nevertheless, every exertion must be made, in order that the Missionaries may not be deprived of the precious fruit of the M. Holy Sacrifice, abstaining from It, only in the case, in which nothing better can be done. » It was also with the same view, that we requested and obtained from the Holy Father, Leo the 12th, of happy memory, the faculty of saying Mass on our journeys, not less than three hours after noon, which supposes that, being in the possibility of doing it, we ought to be in the disposition of extending the natural fast to that advanced hour, rather than deprive ourselves of that Holy Sacrifice, and many of our number have profitted by this concession, when they have seen it in their power to arrive before that hour in any of our houses. But if this case is rare, it ought to be still more rare, to see a Missionary of our Congregation abstain from saying Mass under pretexts which the spirit of our Institute cannot admit.

I insist on this point, because to my great astonishment, I met some of our Fathers capable of this unpardonable sloth, a real infraction of one of our most essential

Rules, and this, perhaps, from having seen other Priests make no difficulty in omitting Mass when, to say it, would cost them a little trouble. I am confirmed in my supposition, from its having been my lot to meet with a Priest, otherwise good, who unceremoniously said to me, in a religious house, in which I was going to say Mass, as well as the Fathers who accompanied me: « Tomorrow, I shall take a little repose. » This did not mean that he would rise later, for he attended me; but simply that he would not give himself the trouble of saying Mass. It is the repetition of similar examples, under the eyes of our Fathers in England, which might induce them to contract evil habits, against which it is my duty to engage with the « strong one armed »; in one of his formidable strongholds, and that you need nothing less than the strength of God Himself, to triumph over this powerful enemy. And whence will you draw the strength, but from the Holy Altar, and from Jesus Christ your Head? Our devotion towards His Divine Person ought to be the more lively, that we have, before all, to repair the outrages which He has received in this land wherein you dwell, and to atone to

Him, for the impious and insolent revolt, in which this strayed people still persevere; refusing to adore Him in this Sacrament of His love for men. Let this spirit of reparation, therefore, animate us constantly, let it inflame our souls, let it inspire us always to leave nothing undone; 1st to offer Him ourselves, as it were, a holocaust and to bring back to Him as many as possible of the strayed souls.

(Copy. Gen. Arch. O.M.I.)

**265 — To Father de l'Hermite, at Bordeaux,
January 10, 1852.**

You know you are always in my thoughts, in the morning during the Holy Sacrifice and in the evening at the audience our divine Master gives us, when we pay him our homage in the mental prayer we make in his presence before the holy tabernacle. I remind you of this, my dear son, so that you may be present with me at this rendez-vous. The only means of bridging distances is to be together at the same moment in the presence of the Lord. It is like finding each other, side by side so to speak. We do not

see each other, but we hear each other, we are conscious of each other, we become united in the same centre.

(Mss. Post.)

266 — **To Father Delpuch, December 10, 1856.**

I have told Father Vincens that I consider it indispensable that you arrange in your house a chapel where the Blessed Sacrament may be preserved. Our evening oraison must definitely be made in the presence of Our Lord, and we must be able easily to visit Him often during the day. This would be impossible if we had to go to a public church.

(Mss. Post.)

267 — **To Father Lacombe, in Canada, March 6, 1857.**

You could not believe how much I think in the presence of God of our dear Red River missionaries. I have only one way of drawing near to them, and that is in front of the Blessed Sacrament, where I seem to see you and to touch you. And you for your part

must often be in His presence. It is thus that we meet each other in that living centre which serves as our means of communication.

(Mss. Post.)

268 — **To Father Végreville, in Canada,**
March 25, 1857.

It is a great consolation to have a common center where we meet every day. What a delicious rendez-vous is that altar on which the holy victim is offered, and that tabernacle to which one comes every day to adore Jesus Christ and speak with him of everything that concerns us. I speak to him of all the other children his goodness has given me; I pray to him to preserve you in those notions of religious perfection of which you gave a fine example during your novitiate and your scholasticate. I pray to him to preserve you in holy humility among the wonders of zeal, of mortification, of charity that your ministry, arduous as it is, so often gives you an opportunity of performing. I pray to him also to preserve your health so that you may be able to continue for a long time responding to your sublime vocation in gain-

ing glory for God and salvation for souls so abandoned, which can only be saved by you, devoted servants who have no other aim in this world. What your reward will be, God alone can measure.

(*Mss. Post.*)

DIVINE OFFICE

269 — **Act of Visitation of the house of N.D. de l'Osier, July 16, 1835.**

No one can forget the importance we in our Institute attach to the recitation of divine office in common. *Haec exercitatio habetur in nostro Instituto velut fons benedictionum quae supra totius Societatis ministerium caelitus effunditur.* Hence it is recommended that all our communities be so attached to the fulfilment of this duty in accordance with the spirit proper to us, that even if the greater number in a house happen to be absent and there are only two members of our Institute present in the community, they are to assemble in choir at the fixed time to recite the office together...

In a word, external duties must never deter the community from the exercises prescribed by the Rule; the latter should be preferred, in desire and in practice, by every member of our Institute.

According to these principles which flow from the very spirit of our Congregation and which, consequently, are to be adopted by all the members of the Institute, no one will be surprised that we could not approve the suppression of every common exercise on Sundays so that all could fully take part in outside ministry.

We deliberately record here this observation which is to be considered a decision that will serve as an imprescriptible norm of conduct for the future.

(Copy. Post.)

MENTAL PRAYER

270 — **To Father Honorat, in Canada, March 1, 1844.**

If a man who makes a daily meditation, examines closely his conscience twice and spends half an hour in mental prayer before

the Blessed Sacrament each day, does not correct his failings and makes no progress towards the perfection of his state, I would believe him much to be pitied and quite close to perdition, whatever preaching he may do in order to convert others.

(Yenveux I, 106)*

271 — Circular Letter, February 2, 1857.

After having condemned the « miserable wretchedness » of those who « half-heartedly drag along in the rut of imperfections from which, one would say, they do not know how to get out », the Founder continues:

But what do they do at oraison which places them twice daily in God's presence to contemplate his divine perfections, to ponder deeply his mysteries, and to form themselves in imitation of the divine Model whose life they meditate and whose commandments they savour especially during the evening oraison, whose object is always Jesus Christ, in whose presence they are greatly privileged to be? What purpose do their two examinations of conscience serve which alone would be sufficient to remove

and destroy all these defects one by one? Don't they find any nourishment for their souls in the divine office recited with alternate pauses in choir? And in the holy Mass preceded by the morning oraison which prepares the soul for all the impact of grace? And the monthly day of recollection, and the annual retreat, which precedes the renewal of vows? And confession, at least once a week, and direction and the exercise of the « coulpe »; in a word, the ensemble of the life of perfection which is sufficient to form great saints in God's Church? *Flens dico*, infidelity consists precisely in abusing so many graces, so many means of sanctification. Infidelity darkens the intelligence to the point of blinding it by its deplorable state; it dries the heart, to the point of making a person doubt his love for God, doubt the charity that unites the soul to God and makes him live in us.

Is it surprising that a person in such a state ends up by falling into the abyss? A similar deplorable chaos explains the distressing apostasies of which we must be ashamed. No, it is not at the time when one leaves the novitiate or scholasticate, full of fervour that such scandal is caused to the

Church; at that moment, a person is truly worthy of his vocation, longing for the occasion to exercise one's zeal, to sacrifice himself for God's glory and the salvation of neighbour. What happens afterwards? You come into one of these houses where certain members, devoid of piety, are the stumbling-block to new-comers and, by their bad example, soon drag them into a series of infidelities which hurls them to their perdition. We don't need any more of these.

(Copy. Post.)

SELF-DENIAL

272 — To Father Courtès, Turin, May 31, 1826.

Do not tire of leading all your men to the highest virtues of our way of life. Complete self-denial, great humility combined with zeal for God's glory and the salvation of souls, with great respect for and a total submission to our Rules by which we are to reach our goal, will certainly guarantee our success.

(Yenveux V, 29)

273 — To Father Mille, superior at Billens,
September 25, 1831.

In all sincerity, I am happy that you experienced such consolations during your retreat. I will not regret having provided you this happiness if you have firmly acquired the inner conviction that we ourselves are nothing, but that we can accomplish a great deal with God's help if we entertain an attitude of perfect detachment and await direction from obedience; obedience shows us the will of our good Master whom we serve and who has pledged to help us with his powerful grace in the different ministries he himself entrusts to us. Thus, if you totally deny yourself, your tastes, even the ideas your mind may entertain, you will succeed in properly fulfilling the delicate task given to you. I do not pretend to minimize the notion you have adopted of the burden that weighs on you. On the contrary, I agree that you could not bear a heavier burden. However, by living in greater union with God, by reflecting a great deal on the importance of your duties, by studying the performance of those who have been successful in this office, you will achieve the same results.

However you must look to your own self and often remind yourself that God, the Church and the family will require an account *villicationis tuae*. Thereafter, act in all confidence and little by little rectify, as experience indicates, the small mistakes which you might notice as you go along.

(*Yenveux VIII, 154*)

274 — **Diary**, March 4, 1837.

After receiving a letter of « three pages of grievances » from Father Courtès, who could not « stand it any more » at Aix.

What an idea is tormenting thus this dear Father! Does he not know that he is properly placed at Aix? If there are certain things that go against his grain, great God, who is there on this earth here below who is not contradicted, vexed or annoyed? In my opinion, what affects him is the perception of his power and capacity, which he has to restrain in his present position. If however, he wanted to understand his position well, he would have to admit that it is worthy of a man of merit, that it is important, that it is one which a man of his profession would desire. With all that, what

does it matter that only few people attend the sermons he preaches..., that the small number of his usual penitents block access to his confessional, etc.. I admit that I do not know any other remedy for being content in this life than humility, self-denial, readiness for whatever obedience prescribes, a willingness to do one's best in whatever one must do, without worrying about success or the opinion of others. I have never found any other method in the course of my long ministry, which has not always been filled with roses.

(Mss. Post.)

275 — To Father Bermond, August 19, 1841.

You know that in a far-off mission like that of Canada, one must be equal to any trial. We must be able to count on the solidity of the religious virtues of those who are going to find themselves 1500 leagues from me. Who can foresee the afflictions that one will suffer from men or events if one is not strengthened in the practice of humility and abnegation, if one is not rooted in obedience which is the basis of any religious edifice, if one is not disposed to endure the imper-

fections of others and especially if one has not so thoroughly renounced his own will that it no longer hurts to submit to that of a superior, which he even does without effort, without sadness, without the least murmur...

(Mss. Post.)

276 — To Father Bermond, at N.D. de Lumières, September 8, 1842.

Since Father Bermond opposes his appointment to the house of Aix, how can he be sent to Canada where we need exemplary religious?

Moreover, in such distant missions where one can expect so many frustrations, so many vexations, and where to serve demands so much sacrifice for the will, so much fatigue for the body, men are needed who are firmly rooted in holy indifference, devotedness, absolute obedience, men of sacrifice who act promptly and willingly in opposition to their own ideas, etc. If you have succumbed, my dear son, in a trial so weak as the one which has been the first to present itself, what will you do in the midst of the obstacles of a difficult mission? And

if unfortunately, as has happened, you meet in those parts men weaker than yourself in regard to these essentials, religious who are so imperfect as to see only what is human in the superior on whom they must depend, what would happen to our enterprise? I am already troubled in fact by the imperfection of several who, quickly forgetting all my recommendations, conduct themselves in a manner contrary to good sense, to reason, to religion and to all the duties of their profession. My duty is to send men strong in rectitude, lovers of religious discipline, jealous of the honour of the Congregation which others compromise by their murmuring, their spirit of independence and their lack of regularity...

Do you feel yourself to be one of these strong men I seek to come to the aid of an authority that is despised, to give to a whole clergy, a whole people, the example of fraternal union, of religious submission, of charity and of all the virtues which must draw to us men of goodwill who seek a more perfect life and who will become attached to us if we do not repel them by our internal dissensions?

(Yenveux I, 88-89*)*

277 — **To Father Bellon, moderator of scholastics, August 30, 1844.**

A person is not fit for great things if he does not know how to imitate the detachment recommended by Jesus Christ and practised by the Saints. Oh! how lax we are! We arrive at this only by reflecting when we should reach it flying by supernatural instinct.

(Yenveux VIII, 196)

MORTIFICATION

278 — **To Father E. Semeria, at Jaffna, January 25, 1848.**

Before I end this long letter I wish to say to the Father Superior that I approve for the present what he has done regarding the Friday fast, but I exhort him not to adopt easily the relaxations that have been introduced by laxity. We must do more and better than others. If you lose the spirit of mortification, I cannot answer for you any longer. Fr. Semeria, beware of your weakness which arises from the excess of

goodness in your character. You are not above blame in this respect for your governance of the house at Vico. I am having to reform several abuses which you allowed to be introduced through your excessive leniency. One must know how to resist the demands of lukewarmness which hides itself behind pretexts which one must know how to recognise if one is to overcome them. Even less should one listen to people from outside. So do not loosen the bridle before you have got under way. Try hard at first and yield only to experience. That is what you should have done before you reduced our Friday fasts. Do not dispense from the discipline: it does no harm to the stomach.

(Mss. Post.)

279 — Act of Visitation of the Province of England, July 22, 1850.

Do not think yourselves obliged to follow in everything the usages generally received, which may sometimes, if they do not actually trench on the virtue of temperance, be at least but little in conformity with the spirit of mortification, which is recommended to you by the Rules.

Hesitate not to say, if necessary, that you are forbidden to eat out of your repasts; and if it should happen that you were pressed too much on a Friday, declare simply, that you are bound to fast on that day by your Rules. Be assured that, so far from being offended, people will be edified by this moderation and by this fidelity to the Rules.

I shall add, in speaking of the spirit of mortification and penance, that it would be a mistake to imagine that the 7th article of the 3rd paragraph, 2nd chapter of our Rules, regards only Novices and Oblates. For this article, as all the rest of the paragraph « *De mortificatione et corporis afflictationibus* » must be observed by all the members of the Institute, according to the constant and continual practice of all the houses of the Institute, in which I have lived. What unpardonable laxity, to understand it differently from the sense in which it has always been explained by us, and received by others. « *Nil praesentibus regulis statuitur* », that there is nothing fixed as to time and number, except by usage, but the examples which are cited, and the terms which are employed, prove that if there is

nothing fixed, there is something positively recommended; and custom, which has the force of law, has sufficiently explained it, as we ourselves have done, both orally and in writing. During your Novitiate, you must have been sufficiently instructed upon the advantage of bodily mortifications, so that I need not speak of them here.

(Copy. Gen. Arch. O.M.I.)

280 — To Father Boisramé, master of novices at Sicklinghall, November 11, 1860.

I would have shown some sympathy for the weakness of the one whom the Friday discipline appalled and would have made up my mind only after having lost any hope of bringing him to understand that this little mortification, in respect of which all the saints give us their example, and which is adopted by all Orders and religious Congregations and by all those who are determined to submit the flesh to the spirit, is nothing to be afraid of when adopted in a spirit of penitence and in union with the sufferings that our divine Saviour wished to endure in order to redeem us. I would

have advised this timorous Christian to submit to this small penance during an *Ave Maria*. Only if he had persisted in his refusal would I have decided to send him back into the world.

(*Yenveux VII, Suppl. 15*)

TRIALS

281 — **To Fathers Tempier and Maunier, at Aix, October 19, 1817.**

After having endured severe reproaches from the new Archbishop of Aix, the Founder writes to his companions from Paris.

I must not leave you ignorant, my very dear friends and unfailingly good brothers, that our cause... I needed a very special grace not to quarrel openly with the Prelate for letting himself be influenced to the point of being drawn into the maelstrom of the passions of men who for a long time now have impeded and persecuted us. This is perhaps the greatest sacrifice of my self-love I have made. Twenty times in my discussion with the Prelate, I was tempted to jump up... But the Mission, the Congrega-

tion, and all those souls who have yet to be saved through our ministry held me back, nailed me to the hard cross which my nature could scarcely put up with... He gave me all the blame and vindicated the parish priests... If I showed the Prelate some surprise at being so badly rewarded for my unstinting devotedness, his Lordship interjected Scriptural passages to prove to me that one must count solely on eternal reward, that one must sincerely say, like the prophet: *elegi abjectus esse in domo Dei* (Ps. 83:11), that I must beware of pharisaic pride which loves to be saluted in public places, take the first seat, be adorned with beautiful stoles, that he was free to make or not make me his Vicar General... In all this, I certainly find only this last assertion reasonable but it was a quarrel about nothing since it was not I who had asked him to make me his Grand Vicar, that it was he who had broached the matter to me and if I had not refused, it was because I was inclined to believe that this title would be useful to gain more respect for our holy work...

We parted good friends, that is to say, he embraced me two or three times as if

the wounds which rent my heart could be healed by passing a sponge over my face.

I beg you, my dear friends, to join in finding out before God what we must do. Put aside all that is human, consider only God, the Church and the souls to be saved. I will go by what you decide. I am ready to drink the chalice to the dregs. Note that the humiliations are for me; there never was any question about yourselves in all the words exchanged. The Archbishop seems fairly favourable towards the mission but we will have to expect that he will harass us from all sides. He will only let himself be advised by our enemies of whom he is afraid.

(*Yenveux V, 71*)

282 — **To Fathers Tempier and Maunier,**
October 22, 1817.

You will have received my letter of the 19th which perhaps disquieted you somewhat; take heart; I will say to you as Saint Paul did to the Ephesians: *Peto ne deficiatis in tribulationibus meis pro vobis, quae est gloria vestra* (Eph. 3:13). It is quite simple, the devil wishes to do us evil because we

are doing it to him. Please God we will do him still more by snatching away from him, if possible, all the souls he is dragging into hell. He would certainly want to seize back those of our youths at Aix; ought we to deliver them to him? God would hold us to account for them.

(Rambert I, 249)

283 — **Father Tempier to the Founder, October 23, 1817.**

The reply to the letter of October 19, was prompt. Father Tempier wrote from Aix:

Beati estis cum maledixerint vobis homines, et persecuti vos fuerint, et dixerint omne malum adversum vos, mentientes, propter me (Mt. 5:11).

Our dear Superior, one must admit that God treats us with great goodness since he shares with us gifts that he has made to his own Son... You will (we trust) not permit us to be dissociated from you, although seemingly these humiliations may be personal to you. Whatever we may have done, how have we deserved this grace thus to share in the precious cross of the Son of God? Truly, as regards myself personally I

am quite abashed and feel that I am far from deserving this favour. It is a grace of predilection which God gives only to his saints; how could we then complain? Please God that his Providence might always treat us thus and above all that we respond well thereto! Our poor family, so humiliated and so despised would soon become quite holy and then what fruits!

(Rambert I, 250)

284 — **To Fathers Tempier and Maunier,**
October 31, 1817.

Well do I recognize you, dear and good brothers of mine, from the letter you wrote me on the 23rd. Very well! I shall be worthy of you. It is God for whom we suffer; we shall not let ourselves be disheartened... The demon would triumph were we to fail since souls redeemed by our Lord would be abandoned. So let us continue to strive like good soldiers of Jesus Christ... What does it matter after all if some individuals may have revolted against us? Saint Paul the Apostle was treated worse than us for not only was he abandoned by Demas, but he met an

Alexander who did him much evil and all those who were in Asia went away and left him... And when he had to defend his case before the Emperor, no one stood by him; they all abandoned him... Nonetheless he did not lose courage and with the powerful help of God he accomplished his allotted mission and was delivered from the jaws of the lion... It would indeed be foolish for anyone to desire to do good but not experience opposition... Saint Paul was subjected to it everywhere but nevertheless was helped through it by the Lord. Let us be firm in our confidence that it will be the same for us.

(Yenveux V, 67-68)

285 — To Father Sumien, May 2, 1823.

You speak to me, my dear friend, of all the crosses and persecutions that I have experienced since the beginning of the Society. I would have been quite annoyed if such had not been the case. Do you not know that it is the seal of the hand of God upon us? And how could it be otherwise? How can you expect the demon not to make every possible effort to shake us and arouse

at the same time all the tempests from without when he sees his kingdom attacked and so many spoils snatched from his ferocity? It could not be otherwise. It is ever thus that he has acted from Abel down to us. One must read on this subject the admirable epistles of Saint Paul, one finds therein many subjects of consolation for he passed by all the trials, as other saints have. Let us be firm in goodness, walk ever in the paths of the Lord by practicing exactly what our vocation prescribes for us. Let us encourage each other, be united and all will go well because we will accomplish the will of God.

(Yenveux V, 235)

286 — To Father Tempier, Fribourg, September 2, 1830.

Difficulties at Marseilles, after the July Revolution.

My dearest friend, as is my custom, I am going to converse with you for a few moments. Before talking to you about business matters, I want to encourage you in your difficulties and embarrassments brought to you by the present events and the

men with whom you have to deal. It is precisely in circumstances like this that one has to apply all the efforts of which the soul is capable. Sustain it with constant force and multiply it with the energies of your intellectual faculties so as not to let yourself be crushed by adversity nor to be overcome by obstacles and difficulties. I am aware that our ministry of peace often presents painful difficulties because it is linked to all the duties of conscience; but God will give us the light of his spirit if we pray to him with trust. After all, tribulations are in the order of Providence and a means of sanctification for the elect. Far from acquiescing in these vexations of life, which are present in the midst of the sorrows of adversity, we must rather want to live so as to become more like our divine Model and serve his Church with a more perfect disinterestedness. One day spent in these dispositions is worth more merit for heaven than years of fortune and prosperity. In all simplicity I am communicating to you ideas that are very close to me in the sad situation in which I myself am placed. They are true. Let us maintain this attitude.

(Yenveux V, 61)

287 — **To Father Casimir Aubert, September 26, 1836.**

The unexpected death of our regretted Father Pons and the culpable flight of Father Pachiaudi force me to call you to the Major Seminary of Marseilles. The novitiate will be transferred with you to Marseilles. It is not because I am inconsistent in my views that I thus change our plans; but who can put himself against such unforeseen circumstances? Who can resist the very power of God? How Providence proceeds is a great mystery for me. Our duty is to submit to the severe and painful things God has in store without ever being disconcerted, even if he casts us into the greatest turmoil. If we cannot make the voyage with all sails set, we must manoeuvre and make the ship advance only with some of the sails, were it only with the smallest one on top of the mast, that is, the top-gallant sail.

All that I ask under these painful and embarrassing circumstances is that the pilot command during the storm, that the entire crew obey in silence, and that I be spared complaints which are untimely in the present urgencies when each one must man-

age as best as he can, in the post assigned to him.

(Yenveux III, 74; V, 84)

288 — To Father Etienne Semeria, at Jaffna, July 10, 1855.

Give my warmest greetings to each of our Fathers. I do not pity them for suffering a little persecution. This does some good; one keeps greater watch over oneself. And being persecuted by men one draws closer to God who is our only support and true force. May they always walk in the ways of perfection which are indicated to them in their holy Rule, and may they wait for the great moments the Lord gives, by working ceaselessly for their own sanctification and for the salvation of the souls which Divine Providence has sent them so far to seek.

(Reg. lettres, 1855-1863. Post., DM 10)

289 — To Father Roux, September 18, 1857.

I am not surprised at the consolations the good Lord grants you, they are a reward for your fidelity. Why look ahead to the time of trials and aridity? Perhaps it may not

come, and if the Lord wants to put you through such trials, he will grant you the graces needed to bear them and even to derive profit therefrom. I love seeing you evangelizing the hamlets of the diocese of Grenoble, I am edified to see you search for the stray sheep, on foot as the Apostles did. But I also want you to take care of yourself a little more and do not overdo things by going thirty kilometres afield. That is too much.

(Mss. Post.)

CONSTANCY

290 — Act of Visitation of Billens, August 26, 1831.

Continue, therefore, to walk with constancy, in the path you have followed so faithfully so far. If possible, do better still, for when it comes to perfection, we must never say, « That is enough! ». Furthermore, the more you strive to resemble Jesus Christ, our divine Model, the more graces you will receive and the more merit will you reap.

(Copy. Post.)

291 — **To Father Mille, on mission at Malijai
(Lower Alps), December 13, 1840.**

My dear friends, I share the pain brought to you by the indifference of the people whom you are evangelizing. I do not, however, approve the discouragement into which I understand you have fallen, you who are accustomed to be the instruments of God's mercy. You have lost sight of the fact that you can at times be, like the Master who has sent you, witnesses to his justice. Thanks to the Lord such cases are rare, but they do come into the line of your ministry. Hence this should not surprise you. Thus, far from dwelling on the thought of withdrawing as though you had been conquered, it is necessary that you stay there to accomplish your work. It is perhaps in this case a sentence of rejection which can be promulgated only after the normal course of your exercises; even in such a case you will have been God's ambassadors who have fulfilled their mission faithfully. Discouragement is a weakness. If you analyze it well, you will find it is caused by self-love. The Lord, in giving you the lofty mission of sowing, planting and watering, has reserved to himself the

granting of the growth and maturity when it pleases and as it pleases him. Do then, what you have been commissioned to do and leave to God that which belongs to him alone. At most, bring down his merciful action by your urgent prayers and turn him away from executing his justice.

(Mss. Post.)

292 — **To Father Vincens, February 9, 1844.**

After the failure of the first efforts to establish the Congregation in Ireland.

When it is a matter of God's glory and the salvation of souls, we do not worry about any expenses or disturbance. The good Lord has his plans when he permits our efforts to remain without effect. Without being discouraged I am resigned to try and do his work from somewhere else.

(Yenveux V, 61; Rey II, 190)

293 — **To Father Honorat, in Canada, July 18, 1844.**

Perseverance is necessary. It is not possible to have the entire success we desire

as soon as we would wish. We must follow the indications of grace and not force anything.

(Yenveux VII, 35)

294 — **To Father Viala at Blida, March 5, 1849.**

As for the personal offences which you told me of, five minutes' prayer at the foot of my crucifix are enough to make me forget them and I do not even need that much time to forgive them. On this subject I will tell you in confidence that I would have preferred it if the rather too laconic letter which you say you wrote to the Bishop had been more polite. One must never forget the deference due to a Bishop even when one has a complaint about him.

I am finishing in haste, in case I miss the post. Farewell, then, my dear Father, do not let yourself be bowed down by any contradiction, do not precipitate matters through an only too justified feeling of anger brought about by the injustices you are suffering. You know the advice the Apostle gives us on this subject, he who suffered so much from all sides and in all ways. Let us always

have only one God in our sight, and he will come to our help.

(*Yenveux III, 150-151*)

PEACE

295 — To Father Jourdan, March 30, 1823.

Advises and encourages Father Jourdan who is afflicted by scruples. The Founder himself was experiencing serious difficulties and trials during this period.

My dear, good Jourdan, may the peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you! What's this? Could you be without this precious peace that the divine Master came to bring to the world? Ah! if that were so, my good friend, it would indeed be your fault. Why do you allow your soul to be troubled by scruples which torment you and cause such great detriment? Dear friend, trust in my experience. I know this kind of trial, pay no heed to it. Remember that our Lord wishes that his children be led by the way of authority and obedience; it is thus that he manifests his very holy will: *qui vos audit me audit* (Lk. 10:16). Now, I declare to you in the name of God that you are in his

friendship. It is not the thoughts and all the other miseries which obsess you which will make you offend God; you sadden his paternal heart only by lacking confidence in his goodness, in thinking too little of him as a good father who cherishes you and wishes to save you. Rely in this matter on the decision given to you by our dear brothers who love you so much and whom you sadden, as you do me, by the obstinacy you show in not relying on their decision about the situation which it pleases God to let you undergo. Courage, my dear friend. Very great saints have been tried like you, but they became saints in spite of these circumstances because they did not cease to obey; courage, once more, my dear friend, we are all down on the floor praying for you so that you will bear this hard trial like a valiant soldier of Jesus Christ. This so amiable Master, our model, did not yield to despair in the garden of Olives; into what an agony he was plunged nevertheless! Hold on to him and fear nothing, drink the cup of his bitterness since he deigns to let you share in his passion, but do not doubt that he will soon fill you with his sweetest joys. Until then you must keep your peace and obey.

Beware of staying a single day away from the holy altar; it is there you must replenish your strength. At the moment of communion, tell him lovingly about all your sorrows: *vim patior, responde pro me* (Is. 38:14). Embrace his feet in spirit, protest that you will never separate yourself from him, that you wish to love him for ever, then take him into your heart and be not troubled about anything. That is what the Lord orders me to say to you. Adieu, I embrace you very tenderly while commending you to our good mother Mary.

(*Yenveux VI, 17*)

296 — To Father Tempier, June 10, 1826.

Upon returning from Rome after the approbation of the CC. and RR., the Founder makes a detour by way of Chambéry to meet Father Favre, who had also founded a missionary Institute and who was interested in joining his team to the Oblates. The day after the meeting, when the matter is still uncertain, the Founder writes:

Meanwhile, I have done all that I ought to do and the rest is in God's hands. We live only for Him, we wish only the glory of His holy name and the salvation of souls He

has redeemed. When we have done all that is humanly possible we must be at peace and not worry about anything.

(Yenveux V, 85)

**297 — To Father Richard, master of novices
at l'Osier, January 18, 1852.**

I want to tell you once again that you must not worry if at times you do not feel all the fervour you would like to instil in others. The good Lord does not want to feed you with sweets all the time. What would happen to the spirit of compunction, to the life of mortification, surrender, generosity in God's service, if our good Master granted us only consolations and interior joy which seem to assure us that we are doing well and are pleasing to God? It is good to encourage us at the beginning; it is still good from time to time, if God wants to encourage us. However it is not proper that such be the normal state of our souls. So do not ask for more. He knows better than we what we need. Always do everything to please him according to the infallible way of obedience, and let us remain in peace. We will not fail to receive our reward.

(Yenveux V, 30)

VI. THE APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY

LOVE FOR THE CONGREGATION

298 — To Father Tempier, from Rome,
March 9, 1826.

After again expressing his amazement at the way the approbation procedures had progressed right from the beginning, the Founder adds:

And since this is so, must we not be full of gratitude to God and must we not become still more attached to our Society which has just received such convincing proof of God's protection? We now belong to our Society in a totally new way for, as it is now established in the hierarchical order, it is through it that we are united to the supreme Head of the Church who is also our supreme head. Now, we should all be of such a mind that we shall never allow our Society to be surpassed by any other Institute in virtue, in the observance of our Rules, etc.

The Oblates of the Holy and Immaculate Virgin Mary now form a body, a society, a Congregation within the Church. As I have already said they are just as truly a Congregation as the Vincentians, the Passionists, the Redemptorists and others. In each of these Congregations, the members honour their mother by the love which they bear her. Is our Congregation to have the unenviable distinction of harbouring unnatural sons? If there be any such, let them beware. They can no longer find any excuse, I should say pretext, for deceiving themselves, unfaithful thoughts and desires can no longer be justified. In future, they will have to account for their conduct to God and to the Church. The Jesuit, the Franciscan, the Cistercian are not more strictly bound to the observance of their Rules than we are; our Rules have the same sanction as theirs. Of course, we were bound to observe our Rules even while our Society was simply permitted to exist, but now that we are approved and our Constitutions, in every detail, are acknowledged and guaranteed by the Church, woe to anyone who will dare to disregard them...

(As for those who might be tempted

to leave the Society), let these subjects know that we can say to them, like St. Vincent de Paul, it is very doubtful that they will sanctify themselves elsewhere if they cannot sanctify themselves with us. Tell them also that St. Alphonsus always feared for the salvation of such fugitives, his reason being that it is to be presumed that these second vocations do not come from God but from the inconstancy of man. God does not change His ways as man changes his mind.

(Missions 1872, 266-267)

299 — To Father Mouchette, moderator of scholastics, December 2, 1854.

Let all the Oblate brothers be imbued with the family spirit that ought to exist among us. I have seen many religious Orders, I have very close contact with the most regular ones among them. Well, I have recognized besides their merits, a great esprit de corps among them. But nowhere else have I found this more-than-fatherly love of the head for the family's members, this friendly intercourse of the members with their head, all of which results in mutual relationships that come from the heart and

from family bonds among us of father to sons, of sons to the father.

For this I have always thanked God as a special gift he has deigned to grant me; he has given me an exceptional heart, an overflow of love which is special to me, which extends to each one without detriment to the others, as is the case, if I may dare say so, with God's love for men. I am talking about this sentiment I recognize as coming from him who is the source of all love; that has called forth in the hearts of my sons the mutual love that is the distinctive character of our dearly beloved family.

May this mutually help us more to savour the beauty of our vocation, and may everything be related to God for his greater glory. This is the most ardent desire of my heart.

(Yenveux V, 209)

300 — To Father de l'Hermite, February 24, 1855.

The Founder communicates his intention to call Father de l'Hermite to his side.

It is a matter of the welfare and special advantage of the Congregation. Everything must cede to the fulfilment of the latter, because in specially serving the Congregation,

we work for the good of the whole Church, or at least of the Church in those parts of the world where the Congregation struggles for the glory of God, the service of the Church and the salvation of souls.

(*Mss. Post.*)

COMMUNITY (1)

301 — To Father Tempier, August 12, 1817.

Delayed in Paris because of business concerning the Congregation, the Founder expresses his regret at being separated from his brethren and he relates his ideal of community life.

(1) On this topic, cfr.:

- G. COSENTINO, *La vie commune dans les missions étrangères selon notre Fondateur*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 16 (1956), pp. 275-280.
- F. CIARDI, *Fisionomia e natura della comunità oblata nel periodo di fondazione (1815-1818) negli scritti del beato Eugenio de Mazenod*, in *Claretianum*, t. 16 (1976), pp. 173 ff.
- Idem., *Quelques traits de la communauté à la lumière de la vie apostolique*, in *Vie Oblate Life*, t. 36 (1977), pp. 203-224.
- Idem., *Some aspects of community in the light of the apostolic life*, *ibid.*, pp. 193 ff..

My dear friend and brother, if my letters give you as much pleasure as that which I experience on receiving your letters, I imagine that you wish to receive them oftener. As for myself, I would wish to have such happiness every day. I am bored when separated from you and pine for my return. Nothing on earth is worth being kept from dwelling pleasantly in our holy house with such good brothers as yourselves. Never have I appreciated so much *quam dulce et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum* (Ps. 132). This strikes me all the more in that I see with my own eyes that it is not given to all communities to taste this happiness, harder to find than one thinks in this world below. Let us pray God to preserve for us this precious blessing that men cannot snatch from us except by our own fault...

For the love of God never cease to inculcate and preach humility, abnegation, forgetfulness of self, disdain for worldly esteem. May these be ever the foundations of our little Society which, combined with a truly disinterested zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and the most tender, affectionate and sincere charity amongst ourselves, will make of our house an earthly

paradise and will establish it in more solid a manner than all possible orders and laws.

(Rambert I, 234-235)

302 — To Father Courtès and the community of Aix, February 22, 1823.

Let our novices be happy to live in their peaceful refuge. I am envious of their lot and it is with sorrow that I resign myself to what is in store for me. Indeed I offer to God my situation as the direst penance. My whole happiness after the work of our missions is to come and taste a little repose in the bosom of the family wherein everything edifies me, everything charms me. Love one another. Let all agree in maintaining good order and discipline by fidelity to the Rule, obedience, abnegation and humility. The Church expects you all to be a powerful aid in her distress; but be well persuaded that you will only be good enough to achieve something inasmuch as you advance in the practice of religious virtues.

Write me in detail... Remote from all of you as I am, consider me as an exile who longs unceasingly to be at the centre of his

affections and who can only assuage his boredom for a few moments by transporting himself (in spirit) into your midst.

(Yenveux V, 160; VIII, 68)

303 — **To Brother Riccardi**, February 17,
1826.

Brother Riccardi, a deacon, had run away from the novitiate of Aix, then he wrote to the Founder seeking the latter's judgment. The Founder sends a long reply including this text on community life.

In your letter you repeat again and again in summary what follows: « I understand the loss I incurred in leaving the community. I would be desperate if, as I perceive it only too well now, I were obliged to leave it for good. I feel that I am meant to live in community ». Say rather that you have a need, a very great need to live in community. That is why you are right in understanding, but you don't realize sufficiently the pain you caused in leaving the community. However, while it cannot be doubted that you need to live in community, and it is true that you would be right in despairing if you had to leave it for good, it

is no less true that the community needs members who do not bring it the disgusting scene of a tangible discomfort, of insulting contempt, an irregularity that is not very edifying, a scandalous desertion, all of which disturb its calm, peace and happiness, and compromise its very existence.

(Yenveux VIII, 307)

304 — **To Father Honorat, in Canada, March 1, 1844.**

I certainly have something to say about the sudden choice you have made of Bro. Laverlochère for the missions to the Savages. Do you not know that he needs much exercise in the practice, not only of religious, but even of the ordinary Christian virtues? It is not right to leave him on his own. And in that connection, I want to insist again that our Fathers be not sent alone into the missions. The Jesuit Fathers have just made it a rule that even in the missions of the Maduré, the Fathers must always go in pairs. It is my formal intention that you adopt this policy. It must only be set aside by dispensation and necessity.

(Yenveux I, 98, 123*)*

305 — **To Father Guigues, in Canada, July 6, 1845.**

You tell me that the Jesuits make establishments with two persons. I do not think our Rules forbid this when one cannot do otherwise. Certainly I prefer that communities be established better but I will never blame you if, in order to take advantage of a favourable opportunity, you begin with a smaller number. This is practised in all Orders, especially in the beginning.

(Yenveux VII, 52)

306 — **To Father Daly, at Penzance, December 6, 1845.**

Advice to Father Daly who is obliged to live alone.

Your position, my dear Fr. Daly, is one of much responsibility and nothing less than the confidence I have in you can set my mind at rest. It is essential, my dear son, that you be well united to God because you constantly need to be guided by the light He will wish to grant you, when you lack time and opportunity to make consultations. Hence, my dear friend, you must follow your Rule

in both letter and spirit, letting yourself do nothing other than what you would do under my eyes and immediate direction...

Avoid with care, my very dear son, all that can hinder the interior life that should inspire you, otherwise you will risk losing the merit and reward of the fine ministry that you fulfill in the name of the family of which you are one of the cherished sons. For the rest, I do not speak thus by way of reproach but as an observation in order that you may be more on your guard in the delicate position in which you find yourself... How thankful we should be to God for the blessings He showers upon our works. But let us render ourselves worthy of them by a great fidelity to our duty. You know that one preaches more by example than by words.

(Yenveux VII, 135)

307 — **To Father Guigues, in Canada, July 30, 1846.**

What Father Allard tells me about the Red River leaves me no choice but to be alarmed. Our two Fathers, he tells me, are going to be separated for a year. But it is

not my intention that this be so. I cannot consent that our Fathers go alone into any kind of mission. Any kind of good (envisaged) should be dependent on that (policy). Explain this, I beg you, to their Lordships the Bishops and take this to be the rule of your own administration.

Adieu, my very dear Father Guigues, greet affectionately on my behalf all our Fathers and Brothers and receive, all of you, my paternal benediction. Tomorrow, I enter into my 65th year which begins the countdown for eternity. Pray for me.

(Yenveux I, 125)*

308 — **To Father Guigues, in Canada, March 25, 1847.**

It is not to be doubted that it would be desirable that we found missions in the midst of the native peoples. But you know how important it is that there always be two of our men; for that it would be necessary that you send them at least two workers. I cannot believe what Father Bermond says of the indifference of Father Aubert about founding these missions. On the con-

trary, I see that he has sent Father Taché to *Ile à la Crosse*. But I groan to see so young a Father, scarcely out of novitiate, separated from all our Oblates at so great a distance.

(*Yenveux I, 123**)

309 — To Father Etienne Semeria, in Ceylon, January 25, 1848.

You have done very well in not following to the letter the advice that Reinaud gave you concerning your holy profession. You must not boast of it or parade it without reason, but you must never hide it. Moreover, that would be like trying to hide behind your own finger. What you must do is to insist with the Vicar Apostolic that he never separate you. You must not give way to contrary arguments that may be put to you. You must make it known that this would be in a way to do violence to your Institute, that you are absolutely obliged to walk about in pairs, and that therefore it is more simple that you should be placed together. It is essential that you should continue to demand that you be left in pairs. If there is only

enough for one you must share what there is, but I can never agree that a subject be alone without at least one companion.

The Jesuits have established this rule even in their missions in Maduré. Above all we must take the precautions necessary for the safety of our own men, and this will only make more certain the conversion of others... Tell him that I will not refuse to send you more subjects when I am asked for them provided they are placed in pairs; but it will always be immensely important that you establish a principal house in one of the main towns. You must set your mind firmly on this, using if necessary funds that we will try to obtain from the Propagation of the Faith.

(Mss. Post.)

310 — **To Bishop B. Buissas of Limoges,**
February 20, 1848.

I experience grief which I cannot but confide to you. You know that each one must live one's own life and follow one's vocation. It happens that because of the system followed in Limoges, our Oblates are deprived of what they have come to seek in

the Congregation. To live in community, they have given up the ordinary parish ministry, and it is especially through the use of the missions that they lead souls to God. Their Rules provide that they live in community, so much so that they prescribe they always go forth in pairs: *Duo saltem ibunt ad missiones*. I understand that at times it is necessary to dispense from this point of the Rule, especially when a missionary is sent to assist a parish priest. It is essential, however, that this be a temporary measure only. You understand, Monseigneur, that there are good reasons for this. Moreover, there is a point of the Rule that says: *Nequamquam licet paroecias regere*. Their lot gives them enough to do, so that they can leave to others the care of parishes for which they are not called...

I wanted to give you Monseigneur, a general view of our missionaries' Constitutions, to help you understand that we cannot give them another orientation than that which they have received from the Church. Even were I to desire it, my authority does not go that far. Hence it is essential that the Oblates form a community, where they can always find the spiritual aid the Consti-

tutions assure them. In continuously disposing them to replace parish priests, they are deprived above all of the advantages they had come to seek in religious life, in community life; they are isolated for long periods of time, which is contrary to their Rules, and they are thrown into the parish ministry, which also is against their Rules and their vocation: they are called to the Congregation precisely never to be parish priests. Furthermore, it is within their community that, by practising virtues prescribed for them by mutual example and good direction, they find the means needed to preserve them in their fervour and the ways of perfection. They must strive to pursue perfection so that their ministry may be blessed by God and produce the fruit which, by God's grace, we have always reaped.

(Yenveux II, 146)

311 — To Bishop Pavy of Algiers, December 4, 1848.

I have founded our Oblates of Mary only to put them at the service of the Bishops with whom they must cooperate most faith-

fully, without any other purpose than the glory of God and the sanctification of souls. They are men of zeal and devotion. All they ask — and it is in the Bishop's interest to grant them this — is to live according to their Rule in community, in order to maintain their regularity and fervour and to help each other fully to accomplish their duty.

(Yenveux III, 143)

312 — To Bishop Provencher of Saint-Boniface, January 24, 1852.

The Founder informs him of the newly ordained Bishop Taché's return, accompanied by 4 new missionaries.

I recommend Mgr Taché, your Coadjutor, to send out the missionaries two by two. The mere fear that can overtake a man otherwise has caused several to withdraw to whom I had suggested that they undertake this mission. It is better to visit fewer places than to expose your priests to an isolation like that in which Fr. Faraud and others were left. On this point you may need to remind our good Mgr Taché of this recommendation, for his zeal would like to em-

brace all at once the immense territory not yet explored which is your share in the field of the Father of the family.

(Yenveux I, 124)*

313 — Instruction on Foreign Missions, 1853.

To whatsoever Missions in foreign countries they may have been sent, our Fathers will always bear in mind that they must be inflamed with a desire of perfection so much the more ardent the longer they are separated against their will, from the company of their brethren, and that they must be faithful to the duties of their religious state and to the exercises of christian piety with a will so much the more determined, the more frequently they are deprived of the benefits of community life. Consequently they will foster in their hearts the love of prayer and will not neglect the daily exercises of meditation and examination of conscience; they will entertain pious thoughts and good desires by the assiduous reading of the Holy Bible and of some ascetic work. They will observe most faithfully the prescriptions of the Rule concerning the devo-

tion towards the Holy Eucharist, the daily celebration of Mass and the frequentation of the Sacrament of Penance. Every month they will spend a day in spiritual recollection and every year, all together, they will perform the exercises of the holy retreat as it is customary in the Congregation.

(Printed, p.8)

314 — **To Father Etienne Semeria, at Jaffna,**
September 29, 1853.

Father Semeria had intimated his difficulty confessing to a confrère.

As soon as possible it must be seen to that they always go about in pairs, whatever the cost. If some missions suffer through this, that would be less regrettable than the damage that results from our subjects living on their own. They will have to stay less in the same place, but they will travel round the missions, and being in pairs will be able to do more in a shorter time. At all costs, we must not put our subjects in danger. I am full of regret for those whom death has taken from us; this is God's will,

to which we must submit, and we cannot be held responsible for these sad events, although we so greatly regret them; but for subjects to be lost without the help that they have a right to expect from the Congregation to which they have given themselves in total abandonment is another matter. And so you must do all you can to ensure that we fulfil our responsibilities.

(Yenveux I, 125)*

315 — **To Father Gondrand, November 24, 1853.**

I would like to point out to you that a religious is obliged to provide only for the most urgent needs of his father or mother... Consider yourself... by this present letter, as duly authorized to solicit and accept, outside of the communities of the Congregation, any ecclesiastical job, to administer its income, either for your personal needs or for helping your family. I remind you, however, always to live frugally according to the spirit of poverty. As the sacred perpetual bonds that unite you to the Congregation are not broken by this favour, you will main-

tain with me a relationship of direction which will preserve the spirit of this precious obedience which, I don't think, was ever a great burden to you. In my opinion, a letter every three months would not be too heavy an imposition and it would suffice strictly to satisfy our consciences. In your daily life, you will try to abide by the Rule as closely as possible, you will continue to recite the holy Office proper to the Congregation, and in your daily exercises you will remember to say everyday the litany that is recited in our communities after the particular examination of conscience.

My dear son, I think I have sufficiently understood your views; you have found in me a good father and an easy-going superior... besides, it is something I can grant you, for provision is made for this, at least with regard to parents, and it is done, though rarely, to be frank, in other Orders and Congregations. Be happy in this new phase of your life and do everything you can to sanctify yourself in it. You will use this dispensation only as long as it is necessary to ease the urgent needs of your parents. When you return to your family, you will

be received there with the cordiality and fraternal friendship that is your due... Farewell, my dear son, I press you to my heart with all the more love, for I know you are in great sorrow.

(Yenveux, VIII, 320)

316 — To Bishop Guigues, in Canada, June 2, 1855.

I am going to send two more subjects to Mgr. Taché in order to avoid the serious disadvantage of leaving our fathers isolated at such great distances from one another. I have already remedied this unhappy state of affairs in Oregon; I am most anxious that such isolation should not happen anywhere. But the zeal of this good bishop makes him push ever further afield his conquests for the faith, and so, by multiplying the number of missionary posts he can only with difficulty provide our missionaries with companions.

(Registre lettres 1855-1863, Post., DM 10)

317 — **To Bishop Dupanloup of Orleans,**
April 10, 1856.

I do not want to make any remark at all concerning the note you were kind enough to send me; nevertheless, I must tell you, Monseigneur, that I cannot agree to our Fathers being away from their house for nine months of the year. This is against the Rule which wants them to be not only missionaries but religious as well. This is against what is being practised in all our communities, where the members spend the greater part of the year in their house, performing the exercises of the religious life which makes them more suitable to fulfil worthily the duties of their apostolic ministry.

(Registre lettres 1855-1863, Post., DM 10)

318 — **To Father Ch. Baret, at Bordeaux,**
November 9, 1856.

What I again recommend to you, is that upon returning to the community, you immediately resume the most exact practice of the Rule, the practice of the religious virtues so as to be in good conformity with

the spirit of our vocation. The latter wants us to be apostles outside and to some extent, hermits in our communities where we dedicate ourselves to study and our personal sanctification.

(Mss. Post.)

**319 — To Father Maisonneuve, in Canada,
March 13, 1857.**

I would very much have liked to provide lavishly for the needs of your mission, but it seems to have been expressly intended that two of those whom I was intending to send you have fallen ill, so that we fear that they will not be able to travel with your Bishop and Vicar. I am very dismayed, especially as regards Fr. Bouquillon, who would have been a great help. Since I am in Paris, I have not yet been able to find a replacement. For your mission I want a strong man with a good will. I am also most anxious that you should be in pairs in your missions, for the great distances between the places where you live make it almost impossible for you to communicate with each other and I am troubled by your isolation; this is a time to pray the Master of the harvest to

send labourers into his vineyard; not all missionaries are suitable for a mission like yours.

(Mss. Winnipeg)

320 — To Bishop Joseph-Marie Bravi, Coadjutor to the Vicar Apostolic of Colombo, 1858.

For the moment I ask only one favour of you: that I may be allowed to make up the number of Oblates in service in your Vicariate to four. I would further ask you to place this fourth one in a post near to that in which you have put Fr. Perréard. I am most concerned that the missionaries do not live too far away from each other. It is an advantage for them, and the people entrusted to their care benefit from it enormously. They keep up their fervour through this mutual help and the souls of the faithful feel the effect of this. The favour I am asking is too much in conformity with the zeal that animates you, for me not to be certain of obtaining it from your goodness.

*(Diary Semeria, copy Batayron, p. 355
Gen. Arch. O.M.I.)*

**321 — To Father Gaudet, at Brownsville,
August 28, 1858.**

I approve of the arrangements that you have made for Matamoros. It is a perpetual mission with the aim of serving and converting souls. All that I would wish is that you should never leave a Father alone in this ministry; there must always be at least two together, and they must follow the Rule exactly, for otherwise a priest alone would grow stale and lose the habits of religious life. That is why I shall insist that they retain frequent contact with their community at Brownsville, that they go there to make their monthly retreat, and for direction with the Superior.

(Registre lettres 1855-1863, Post., DM 10)

FRATERNAL CHARITY

**322 — To Father Guibert, superior at N.D.
du Laus, July 29, 1830.**

On his arrival at Fribourg after having passed through N.D. du Laus, the Founder says that he was « still hurt » by the lack of regularity

in this community. After reminding them of their duty to observe the Rule, he gives the unifying principle of our entire life: charity.

Charity is the pivotal point on which our entire existence revolves. The love we are to have for God has made us renounce the world and devote ourselves to his glory by any sacrifice even that of our life. To become worthy of God to whom we have consecrated ourselves, we have made the vow to deny ourselves through obedience, to give up wealth through poverty, and forego pleasures through chastity. I have nothing to complain about this last point, I have little to say about the second point, but the first one is not understood by certain persons. Hence the disorders which I have had to deplore. Never cease to meditate on this all important point; we are not religious if we observe it as badly as we have done so far.

Charity towards the neighbour forms another essential part of our spirit. We practise it first of all among ourselves by loving one another as brothers, by considering our Society as the most united family found on this earth, in rejoicing as much over the virtues, talents and other qualities which

our brothers possess as if we ourselves possessed them, in gently bearing up the little defects which some have not yet overcome and in covering them up with the mantle of the most sincere charity, etc.; with regard to the people outside, by considering ourselves as the servants of the common Father entrusted with relieving, assisting and leading his children by assiduous labour, in the midst of tribulations and persecutions of all sort, without claiming any other reward than that which the Lord has promised to the faithful servants who accomplish their mission worthily.

(Yenveux I, 205)

323 — To Father Tempier, January 11, 1831.

You will easily understand, my dear friend, how much I am suffering because of the almost desperate state of our poor Father Capmas. I am awaiting with as much impatience as anxiety the Thursday mail which will, in all probability bring me the definitive word about his fate. I must admit that sickness and death strike us with a discrimination that would undo persons less sub-

mitted to God's will than we are. I confidently make this reflection because I see myself quite well established in this habit of conformity to the impenetrable design of divine Providence even though I certainly do not boast of being insensitive to the blows which sometimes seem to overwhelm us. Even if this kind of perfection were offered to me I would have none of it. I say even more: it is a kind of scandal for me when I see it praised in some works of history where, undoubtedly, it is falsely attributed to men whom even by lying, we try to place above human nature and thereby slander them, in my opinion, in a cruel manner. Jesus Christ, our one and only model, has not given us such an example. I adore his trembling and his tears at the brink of the tomb of Lazarus as much as I despise and detest the stoicism, callousness and egotism of all those who would, it seems, surpass this prototype of all perfection, Jesus Christ, who wanted to sanctify all situations of our sad pilgrimage.

(Yenveux V, 91)

324 — **To Father Mille, superior at Billens,**
April 21, 1832.

Oh! how afflicted I am by these little quarrels among the brothers. I know that attempts are made quickly to repair the harm inflicted on charity. They should not, however, fall into such faults which always weaken a virtue they ought to possess in the highest degree. I strongly recommend that they apply themselves to root out this kind of small aversions that spoil our heart.

(*Yenveux V, 215*)

325 — **To Father Courtès, June 12, 1832.**

Did I not know from experience that the most holy and fervent communities are not exempt from certain miseries, I would be surprised that there are even passing onslaughts of self-love among us. Alas! it is the sad state of our nature which is so difficult to completely master. On this point, you will do well to inculcate the mutual respect due to one another and you will fight against the cynical style which is not at all proper to men like ourselves. I admire

how you do your best in these circumstances to avoid the danger of certain individuals meeting head-on. It is well known that they cannot be teamed up. Here we have one difficulty more in our service.

(*Yenveux V*, 245)

326 — **Act of Visitation of N.D. de l'Osier,**
August 2, 1836.

One more thing we would like to correct radically is the kind of talk that has set in here. The adopted method is to make fun at everything and everyone. Besides the fact that it ends up in being tedious, there is no doubt that such a style is not always the mark of polite people; furthermore it definitely is not becoming of religious who ought to be greatly reserved even in their cheerfulness and observe a habitual modesty in all their words and actions. *Modestia vestra nota sit omnibus hominibus* (Phil. 4:5). It is not rare that these foolish jokes go as far as hurting people — I have witnessed it myself — and then what happens to the precious virtue of charity! It seems to me that I have already made the remark that

this lack of seriousness is essentially detrimental to the respect due to one another, and that it especially weakens the force of discipline and the healthy influence that the superior must always exert on the community.

(*Copy. Post.*)

327 — **Diary, September 4, 1837.**

After his house-keeper Dauphin's death from cholera, the Founder expresses in his *Diary* his «sorrow over the loss of this faithful and good servant», a sorrow he feels «very strongly» and without shame. Then he adds these reflections:

I declare that I cannot grasp how those who do not love human persons who deserve to be loved, can love God. From this one can understand that I am far from wanting to disown or even only hiding the sentiments inside me. Let him who may be tempted to find fault with me know that I little fear his judgment and that I could forcefully prove to him that I have every reason to thank God for having given me a heart that is able better to understand that of Jesus

Christ our Master, who has made, animates and inspires mine better than those cold egoistic logicians who apparently put their heart into their brain, and don't know how to love anyone because, in the final analysis, they love only themselves. And it is after Christ has come, after the example of Saint Peter, after the teaching of Saint John, that they debit us with a type of perfection more worthy of Stoics than of true Christians! Let us love God because of his infinite perfections, let us love him also because he has loved us first, *sed quoniam ipse prior dilexit nos*, but *Charissimi si sic Deus dilexit nos, et nos debemus diligere*, and not well *filioli mei non diligamus verbo neque lingua* as those who love with their head *sed opere et veritate*. Oh no! *qui non diligit non novit Deum quoniam Charitas est* (I Jn. 3:18; 4. 8, 10, 11, 19).

This love is so little a matter of speculation or of abstracting from the person. It is so true that we have to know how to love here on earth so as to be able to love God for whose sake we truly love his creatures, that the Apostle tells us: *Qui enim non diligit fratrem suum quem videt, Deum, quem non videt quomodo potest diligere?* There is no

half measure, *mandatum habeamus a Deo ut qui diligit Deum, diligat et fratrem suum* (I Jn. 4:20, 21). Let us study Saint John, fathom the heart of Saint Peter and his love for his divine Master, and especially let us deeply probe all that flows from the loving heart of Jesus Christ not only for all men, but especially for the Apostles and Disciples, and then let them dare to come and preach to us a love that is speculative, without feelings or affection.

(*Mss. Post.*)

328 — To Father Honorat, superior at Longueil, May 31, 1843.

Welcome always with mildness and charity all the observations which come from no matter which of your members. No outbursts, no short-temperedness. The result of such reactions is to stifle communication and confidence. While saying my Office yesterday, I was struck by these words of St Paul to the Ephesians which should be graven on all hearts: « *Obsecro... ut digne ambuletis vocatione qua vocati estis cum omni humilitate et mansuetudine, cum patientia,*

supportantes invicem in charitate, solliciti servare unitatem spiritus in vinculo pacis. Unum corpus et unus spiritus sicut vocati estis in una spe vocationis vestrae » (Eph. 4: 1-4). What do you say to that? Is it not a good subject of instruction in your community meetings? This brings to mind a passage of the memorable letter of your holy Bishop (Bourget...) to have great charity, one for the other. Your letter and that of Father Telmon have singularly consoled me, in proving to me that already a great part of the things which the Bishop desired have been reformed; thus you tell me that your relations with parish priests are such as I would wish. This was such a delicate point. It only remains for me to ask you kindly to abstain from any critical observations or even ungracious observations about the other religious Congregations. Our dear Bishop also said, as I told you, in his letter: « not to show susceptibility over the establishment of other religious Congregations in the diocese, to applaud the good they perform, without fear of being eclipsed by it ». This is not only a duty of conscience but also an exigency of wise policy. If some priests have disparaged you, which I cannot

easily believe, punish them like Christians and good religious by remarking on their goodness at every meeting. From the words of the Bishop it is to be feared that you may have some cause for reproach on this subject. For the rest, I will say once more as does the holy Bishop: be on your guard not to give credence lightly to certain rumours which give currency to the malice of those who love to foment divisions amongst brothers, in order not to become incensed against parish priests over trivialities; this in the Bishop's judgment has done you harm. Let me add that were it even true that someone has presumed to make certain observations against you, it would be a hundred times better to ignore them than to retort. You will have seen from experience that such prejudices do not last and he who might be inconsiderate of you will be much more easily won over to your side if he learns that you speak well of him and are not resentful of his lack of justice to you, than if your complaints about him reached his ears with all the exaggerations which would be added by those who would report them. In a word, act in all things like men of prayer who are only inspired by supernatural views

in the charity of Jesus Christ. Demand such conduct strictly from all those under you for I tell you like Saint John: « It is the precept of the Lord ».

*(Mss. Post. and Yenveux V, 207;
IX Suppl. 25, 34-35)*

329 — **To Father Courtès**, February 26, 1848.

According to what you tell me, I consider it very important that Father Burfin finds you still at Limoges when he arrives there. You will have to instruct him so as to make him understand well our position and to suggest to him how he should behave both towards the members of his community and towards the Bishop. In particular, you must advise him never to betray our men when some think it necessary to judge them severely. It happens only too often that people give in to the wretched vanity of being considered as better than others by openly agreeing about their weakness. Even humanly speaking, this is a miscalculation, and in the supernatural domain it is a great fault.

(Mss. Post.)

330 — **To Father Léonard, appointed superior of the house in Montreal, January 11, 1849.**

Our Fathers have fallen into the habit of arguing over obedience and of permitting themselves to weigh human worth according to a standard other than what is just. Hence these senseless apathies and bad feelings in a group wherein should reign only peace, simplicity, religious respect, mutual support, in a word, all the virtues they have vowed to practise. Can you imagine being so disloyal as to let oneself be influenced by the views of strangers as to the worth of one's brothers, instead of repulsing these impertinences by sternly showing that one's sense of propriety has been offended and by defending as one ought a brother condemned by people who have no right. In censuring one's brother in this manner, the idea is to appear to be distinguished by good judgement and perhaps to be more estimable than the brother who is scorned. But one is sure to be deceived by this stupid self-esteem and punished for this grave lack of charity, for this forgetfulness of the elementary rule which makes it a duty for a

brother to defend his brothers. The very ones to whom you have betrayed your brother will despise you in turn and you will only obtain what you deserve. I have voiced to you my extreme displeasure on this subject several times. I am so upset that were I on the scene, I would punish any missionary found at fault on this point, even by prohibiting him from celebrating Mass.

(Yenveux V, 222)

**331 — To Father Etienne Semeria, at Jaffna,
January 21, 1852.**

Your remarks on the indiscretion of certain ideas of your young Fathers are entirely just. That is a great fault, which they will correct through your good advice, a fault of which unfortunately an example has been set to them. You will realise that this is not the first time that I have complained about this, and that I fulminate against it because it is so opposed to the spirit of charity and to so many other virtues which should be practised by all our men. But your Fathers are essentially good. With regard to them, it is right for me to say to you that although

you are their superior you must not call them « sons », as I think I understand that you do, and to their satisfaction. Nor must it be allowed that people regard themselves as your sons. This is something that is reserved to the old patriarch of the family. All my sons are brothers, whatever their position with regard to one another.

(Mss. Post.)

332 — Circular Letter of February 2, 1857.

It is a deplorable habit of which the greater number are guilty. I request all the local superiors energetically to repel it. It is the wretched mania of speaking without reflection, without charity, without respect, about everyone and everything. This lack of control of the tongue offends God and neighbour; it is not rare that it results in very serious drawbacks. First of all... serious harm is often brought to the reputation of the family members, a seed of confusion is sown among the brethren which is difficult to suppress; often the wound that is inflicted is incurable, and it is not rare that very great scandal results from it. As soon as a

member arrives at a house, he is immediately surrounded and overwhelmed with questions about the personnel of the house he has just left, about the superior's manner of governing, about the talents, character and defects of each. In exchange for the indiscretion extracted from him, he is informed of all that is taking place, speculation ranges over a thousand and one things, and no one is spared. In a word, this is real gossip unworthy of religious who, nevertheless, have recourse to it almost without scruple, so much have they got into this unfortunate habit. I dwell on this disorder because it is so common. My hope is to see it radically rectified, and that promptly, for it vitally hurts charity and is destructive of regular discipline in a serious matter.

(Copy Post.)

UNITY AMONG OBLATES

333 — **To Father Tempier**, October 9, 1815.

Happiness awaits us in this holy Society which will have but one heart and one soul.

(Rambert I, 166)

334 — Constitutions and Rules of 1818.

Closely united in the bonds of fraternal charity, all will be exact in the practice of holy obedience...

(Part II, ch. 1, para. 4)

335 — To Father Courtès, November 8, 1821.

Get together often and live in the most perfect unity. When I say unity, it is not that I fear that you quarrel, this thought does not cross my mind, but I wish to speak of that cordiality, that fusion, if I may use that expression, which ought to exist amongst all the members of our Society which ought to have but one heart and one soul.

(Yenveux V, 210)

336 — To Father Courtès, March 3, 1822.

Let us be united in the love of Jesus Christ, in our common perfection, let us love each other as we have done up to now, let us, in a word be at one.

(Yenveux V, 180)

337 — **To Brother Guibert**, January 20, 1823.

We form a family of which all who compose it wish only to have one heart and one soul.

*(Vie du Cardinal Guibert
by Paguette de Follenay I, 73-74)*

338 — **Retreat Notes**, October 8, 1831.

Closely united with Jesus Christ, their Head, his children will be one among themselves, very closely united by the bonds of the most ardent charity, living under the most perfect obedience, in order to acquire humility which is so necessary for them, « *arctissimis charitatis vinculis connexi* ». Hence they must not sulk at one another, not sadden one another through expressions of indifference or coldness. « *Arctissimis charitatis vinculis connexi, omnes sanctae obedientiae sub superiorum regimine exacte subiicientur* ». This does not apply only to the Superior General. What shall I say about murmuring? What about bias?

(Mss. Post. DM IV, 3)

339 — Act of Visitation of the house of N.D. du Laus, May 28, 1834.

We have also been very consoled by the spirit of true fraternal charity, mutual respect and submission to the superior, that prevails among this beloved portion of our family. Here, as in other houses of the Congregation, it may be said that they are of one heart and one soul. May God preserve forever in the Congregation this valuable conformity with the first disciples of the Gospel.

(Copy. Post. DM IX 4)

340 — To Father Honorat, sent to Canada, September 29, 1841.

Be mutually encouraging and edify one another. Be united in the same spirit, working together for the faith of the Gospel. You especially whom we have appointed to lead and direct your brothers, excel more in merit and virtue rather than in being elevated as the one in charge; endeavour more to endear the hearts of those under you by charity and mildness than to lead them by authority. Strive by the observance of our Rules

and the practice of piety towards God to show yourself such that your companions may seek avidly to follow you step by step and to emulate you.

(*Latin Mss. Arch. Deschâtelets. Ottawa*)

341 — **To Father Honorat, in Canada, October 9, 1841.**

Be of one mind, put up with each other. Even though something be not to your liking, take care not to grumble. Communicate the observations that you believe useful, but mildly, not contentiously or bitterly. If they are not adopted, keep your peace and do not swerve from obedience. Never make personal remarks, never be touchy, let there be candour, frankness, simplicity, mildness and especially charity, *omnia nostra in charitate fiunt*. In case of need, communicate with me confidentially but only after ruminating the matter at the foot of the crucifix, without prejudice, without exaggeration. We are all members of one body, let each strive by every means and by making sacrifices, if he must, for the well-being of this body and the growth of all its potentialities.

(*Mss. Post.*)

342 — **To Father Honorat, in Canada, March 26, 1842.**

The future of the Congregation in the New World is in your hands. Be what you should be, that is, truly good religious, disciplined in your whole behaviour, perfectly united, of one heart and mind, moved by the same spirit under that ordered regularity which marks you in the eyes of all as men living up to the exigencies of their rule, in obedience and charity, devoted to all works of zeal conformed to such obedience and not otherwise, never seeking their own interest but only what pertains to the glory of God and the service of the Church.

(Yenveux II, 52)

343 — **To Father Honorat, in Canada, July 18, 1844.**

The more there is question of extending the work of God, the more I recommend union, charity and the most perfect regularity. Now should be the time to understand the duties of obedience and to learn to respect authority. Cursed be the murmurers,

these *susurrone*s described in the Holy Scriptures. The evil done by these wretches is incalculable. They are veritably the fiends of hell who work to destroy the work itself of God. If ever a voice were to be raised again to pour forth this venom, let it be stifled under a general cry of reprobation. Join together all of you to extirpate this detestable vice which has caused so much trouble amongst you and of which the newcomers have felt the deadly effects by the influence of bad example. If vocations have not increased, attribute it solely to that. I am surprised that a single one of those who first presented themselves has persevered. I regard that as miraculous but they will be affected for a long time by the bad air which they have breathed.

It is not only the superior they must respect; they must also have mutual respect for each other and never permit the least unfavourable remark about anyone. Otherwise they come to look down on one another. He who wants to give proof of shrewdness and make himself judge and severely censure his brother is judged in turn with little consideration and so it is by lack of charity that they become despicable one after the

other to the great scandal of everyone, both within and without.

(*Yenveux V*, 240)

344 — **To Father Gaudet, in Canada, April 29, 1848.**

I am most glad to see that you are happy. I conclude from this that you will be blessed by God. *Hilarem datorem diligit Deus*. I recommend that you seek ever to be united amongst yourselves and to have the greatest deference for those who stand in the place of God. Remember what I have recommended so much to you all. Never murmur amongst yourselves, never reveal confidential matters outside. Your predecessors were not always sufficiently reserved on these two counts, so what mischief has not resulted in consequence! Ah, if only one would reflect a little more on the Holy Rules that the Church has given us, how many faults would be avoided and what progress would not be made in the way of perfection!

(*Yenveux V*, 216, 244)

345 — **To Father Faraud, in Canada, May 10, 1848.**

With regard to communicating news about the Oblate « family ».

You know that we should all say in the broadest sense *omnia mea tua sunt* since we are all but *cor unum et anima una* as long as we are in Heaven and on earth — that is our strength and our consolation.

(*Mss. Post.*)

346 — **To Father Baudrand, in Canada, January 11, 1850.**

Let us rejoice then mutually over all the good done by our brethren in the four quarters of the world. With us, it is wholly a question of solidarity. Each works for all and all for each. Oh! how beautiful, how touching is the communion of Saints?

(*Mss. Post.*)

347 — **To Father Durocher, in Canada, January 17, 1851.**

I am sending Fr. Tempier as Visitor of our houses in Canada. You will be happy with this Visitor, my first companion in the family to which we all belong. You can speak

to him with the same confidence as to myself; we have but one heart and one soul, and this is how I wish it to be with each one of you. That was always our vision, like that of the first Christians; it is because they have forgotten this that many have abandoned the spirit that I wished to establish in our Congregation.

(*Yenveux V, 172*)

348 — Letter to the Oblates of the Diocese of Saint Boniface, May 26, 1854.

Live for God and for the Church, for the sanctification of the poor heathen, for the Congregation to which you give honor, in return for the favor that she does you in welcoming you into her bosom. Be united, *cor unum et anima una*. Constantly re-read your holy Rules. By being faithful to them you will become holy. Be full of the respect that you owe to your superior, who represents in two ways the person of Jesus Christ our Master. Put aside every thought that could lead you to loosen the bonds that should unite you. Remember that *Deus charitas est*.

(*Mss. Prov. Arch. Winnipeg*)

349 — **To Father Casimir Aubert**, March 22, 1857.

I have learnt of what is happening in Montreal through your brother's letter. The state of that community is something truly stupendous. We will end up by making a regular and strict visitation that will remove from that house the mischief-makers who alienate all vocations from us. For several years now we have not had any novices while the Jesuits abound with them. But why would anyone come to a Congregation that scandalizes the whole of Canada with its internal dissensions?

(Yenveux VIII, 135)

350 — **To Fathers Maisonneuve and Tissot, in Canada**, November 24, 1858.

The only thing that I do recommend to you is not to neglect your holy Rule. However far away you are from the centre of the Congregation, remember that you must live the life of the family of which you are a part. It is a consolation at the ends of the earth, where you are, to think that you are

living the same life as and in intimate communion with your brothers scattered over the entire surface of the globe. You are on the opposite side of the world from Ceylon — well, you have brothers there in union with you working for you just as you are working for them, who repeat every day the beautiful prayer: *Deus qui caritas es, da nativitas*, etc... We raise the same prayers to heaven, we are inspired by the same feelings. You are present to us just as if we could see you. Have we not a common meeting-place at the altar during the sacrifice and every time we place ourselves in the presence of Our Lord?

(*Mss. Prov. Arch. Winnipeg*)

HOSPITALITY

351 — **To Fathers Guigues and Dassy at N.D. de l'Osier, August 18, 1834.**

If the abundance of outsiders disturbs your internal order, you must take the necessary precautions to maintain regularity nonetheless. They will be more edified by

this fidelity than by excessive politeness which would involve wasting a lot of time and a great disorder.

(Yenveux VII, 158)

352 — To Father Guigues, appointed superior of the new house of N.D. de l'Osier, September 3, 1834.

You will keep me informed of everything. Some decisions have been made for N.D. du Laus that apply to your community, either with regard to the coming of pilgrims or regarding priests who may come to make their retreat or simply to visit you. Remember that you must never be just pleasant companions who waste their time, and that your house is not a furnished hotel. Each one must be about his business in all freedom. Dupuy could attend more to external matters; as for you, it is important that you adopt a practical attitude. People will be more edified by your reserved manner than by a never-ending babbling: after all, you must cope with priests coming in one after another without interruption.

I also recommend that you do not draw

up another daily bill of fare than the one we use. I have settled this point during my last visit to N.D. du Laus.

Do not introduce anything that I will have to reform. No one should be coming to your place to have a good time. If someone does not like your daily fare, he is free to go to a public inn. Let your food be abundant, but meals should never exceed the prescribed number of courses.

(Yenveux VI, 48; VII, 157)

353 — **To Father Mille, superior at N.D. du Laus, August 23, 1836.**

In our day we were satisfied with the daily menu that had been determined as more than sufficient, and we would never have suspected that one had to rate the merits of those who visit us by the number of courses we have to serve them. We did not suppose that anyone could complain to being treated in the same way as we ourselves are treated. Since then, our houses have turned into hotels with a table d'hôte. No one has had any scruples in spending a lot of money without authorization on super-

fluous dishes; no one bothered about scandalizing others by a ridiculous abundance. You are so reluctant to putting yourselves in order on this point and to limit yourselves to our usage that every year during my visits, I have the annoying duty of exercising a painful supervision lest you go beyond the Rule, something for which you always have some reason or other. You may say that my letter is harsh; that is true. I am tired of making ineffective remonstrances.

(Yenveux VI, 49)

AVAILABILITY

354 — **To Father Honorat, May 28, 1826.**

The thought of finding myself so near to you, after having spent six months so far away, adds to my happiness. Even though I do not consider France to be the promised land, nevertheless since what I most love in this world is located there, I cannot help lamenting somewhat for being like the Israelites, held back just at the point of reach-

ing the goal. I am in Turin since one week; that means, if I could have continued my journey, I would have already reached my destination; you know, however, that we are led by Providence. Hence we must always follow the direction that God seems to indicate. When we do things in dependence of God's will, we have nothing to reproach ourselves with, even if we do not achieve what we legitimately wanted, always for the greater glory of God, the salvation of souls and the good of the Society.

(Yenveux V, 86)

**355 — To Father Bellon, master of novices
at Maryvale, June 13, 1849.**

What you tell me about your novitiate is charming. While not a large one, it is true, it is edifying and that is the main thing. I recommend that you firmly instil the principle of holy detachment. Religious life hinges on this. What will happen when we need to consider the tastes and conveniences of each one? Each must attain to such renouncement of his own will, putting himself in the hands of his superiors to such an ex-

tent that he will find himself acquiescent — no, that is not enough — that he will be satisfied with all they decide, whether in regard to ministries, or in regard to places, etc.

(Yenveux III, 80)

356 — To Father Charles Bellon, Visitor-Extraordinary in England, August 20, 1853.

Availability of Father Bellon who will be named superior at Romans, but whom the Founder would have liked to retain close to him.

My very dear and truly good Fr. Bellon, I expected, nothing less from your piety and solid worth than the reply you have made to my last letter. I like such abandonment to the will of God, such renouncement of any particular taste, when it is a question of the service of God and the needs of our dear Congregation. What sort of religious are these with whom one must negotiate and who throw you into inextricable difficulties with their repugnances and all the problems which they cause to rise. They do

not deserve the name of religious for they do not know the prime duties of their holy vocation. It certainly costs me quite enough to endure the sacrifices that circumstances impose. Mark well, my dear son, it would have been a great consolation and an immense relief to keep you by my side. This consideration was of such great weight in my mind that I was on the point of not accepting the offer of the Bishop of Valence. I had to yield to the opinion of those who maintained that while it was necessary for the benefit of the Congregation to accept, we could not do so without putting you in charge of this new establishment. I knew that myself and that is why I went over to this view that is so painful to my heart. I know that after the month of May next year, the railway will be able to take us to Valence in six or seven hours, but that would not requite me, however agreeable it might be. We must therefore desire what the good God indicates as most conform to the purpose to which we want to devote our existence.

(Yenveux III, 90)

357 — To Father Baret, November 28, 1857.

I am surprised at your remarks regarding the house at Limoges. Don't you know yet that a true missionary does not have a permanent dwelling place? I don't see what there is to be discouraged or to bother about. There is nothing more simple or more natural than to go with detachment to where superiors judge before God that so and so can accomplish more good or that it is more appropriate that they go. One is always on the right path in being obedient. Let us leave aside considerations that are too human, they never resulted in very much. All our trust is in God.

(Mss. Post.)

SHARING**358 — To Father Casimir Aubert, master of novices, January 3, 1836.**

I have thanked God sincerely for the happiness he grants you, and I cannot but congratulate you on your resolutions. However, since the aptitude you have received

for sciences is a gift from God, I insist that you should not neglect it. To give it a second place, yes; to hide it so as not to make use of it, no. I again advise you not to concentrate within yourself what God grants you so as to enjoy its delights. Use your wealth generously, share it with others. Draw them, urge them if necessary by the power given you by the light and grace you have received. It is not only on the few novices that I want you to wield this influence, but on all those who are with you, especially those whom I have purposely placed under your direction. I knew that you would be faithful and I was sure I could count on a superabundance in which I wanted some of our men to share.

(Mss. Post.)

359 — To Father Courtès at Aix, November 5, 1844.

Now that Father Rey belongs to your community, I request you to see to it that he works at his desk, to absolutely demand that he composes and writes out his instructions and to reserve to yourself examining

them and correcting them. The good Lord has not given you your talent only for your own use, but in calling you to our Congregation he wanted you to use it for the good of the entire family, especially of those young men whom I place under you so that they may be formed in your school. I implore you, do not lose sight of this.

(Yenveux II, 67)

FRATERNAL CORRECTION

360 — **To Father Vachon, February 28, 1825.**

It would be a great imperfection, my dear friend, to take it amiss that someone has warned you about mistakes you might have made at the start of your ministry, and a real injustice to be resentful to those who would have informed me about them. On both sides, we have performed an indispensable duty and it seems to me that far from complaining, you ought to be happy about this quite fraternal supervision which ensures your progress and preserves you from the error of illusion.

You know our Rules! they are in this

respect eminently wise; let us never stray from them. The first one I reproved in this matter was your superior himself who had thrown you too soon into a ministry which is not learnt by inspiration. He should know that a new confessor is liable to deceive himself and to be deceived. So he should have, after having given you verbally some counsels that are not to be found in the manuals, to insist that you consult him quite often about the cases that you meet and on the method that you have to follow. We have all gone through that, my dear friend. It seems that you believed you knew enough to proceed without guidance, and that is where you deceived yourself: so much for what seems certain. But it is not a crime of which you are accused, so why be troubled? Why do you complain? I did not intend to write you about this but proposed on coming the next time to converse with you, frankly and in quite a friendly manner, to rectify what I might have found defective in your ideas and approve what might have been good. So put your mind at ease and be well convinced that we never have any purpose, either in praising or blaming someone amongst us, other than the greater good of

the member, the honour of the holy ministry and the glory of God.

(Yenveux IV, 228; Rambert II, 662)

361 — **To Father Suzanne**, October 5, 1827.

As for myself, I would not be comforted if there has crept into the Society a spirit of sensitiveness that causes bitterness against those who, often with the best of intentions, give others some useful advice, which sometimes may indeed be contrary to their views or shocking to their self-love, but which may thus be all the more necessary and appropriately given...

My fear is that self-love, self-esteem, contempt for others and all that follow therefrom may involve you; I have many an anxiety regarding this matter. People who are young are liable to fancy themselves. They are not content with fending for themselves; and yet they avoid getting advice from those in whom they should have more confidence, be it only for the interest they take in you and the good they wish for you and the care they take of your good name, because they love you, and with what a love!

(Yenveux II, 40; IV, 228)

DISCRETION

362 — To Father Mye, superior of the new establishment at Nîmes, June 19, 1825.

On rereading the last letter of Father Honorat, in which he shows his impatience to get down to work, I see that some priests whom he calls our friends cannot understand our inaction. That makes me fear that you may have allowed yourself to say something confidential and, I beg you to insist that no one says any such thing to anyone. Everything is repeated and usually very badly.

See everything in a good light, speak openly only amongst yourselves.

(Yenveux V, 223)

363 — To Father Honorat, superior at Longueuil, October 7, 1843.

I fear that in your intimate interviews with the Bishop, you may have spoken too openly about the one amongst your confrères of whom you should be most con-

siderate and you may thus have to blame yourself for having transferred to the mind of the Prelate the prejudices which dominate you at the moment. This would be extremely annoying because prejudices disappear between brothers but they remain forever in the mind of a stranger. What good is that to anyone? You may well have had momentary relief by confiding in this way but the wrong that is done to an individual and which has repercussions on the family is irreparable. It is the duty of the superior to insist upon the worth of his members, as it is the duty of the members to uphold the worth of the superior. This concerted charity profits the entire body and facilitates the good that it is called upon to do. So put aside such worry and know how to make the best of all that is given you, always allowing for what is human without being surprised or upset.

Furthermore I would wish that all of you, each as much as the others, focus yourselves more on your interior relations. What a mania you all have to speak of your business to everybody! Be polite but extremely reserved.

(Yenveux V, 221; VII, 178)

364 — **To Father Baudrand, at Longueuil,**
September 30, 1849.

My heart has often been bruised in its affection for you all and in the love which I must have for the Congregation. I have never been able to bear the idea that anyone could discuss our family affairs in public and take as confidants concerning one's grievances, justified or not, strangers, priests, even if thought of as friends in need. It is thus one becomes ill-considered. Other Societies I have come to know quite well do not act in this way. There are amongst them mediocre men as everywhere else. But you need have no fear that they will betray them. On the contrary, they vaunt their worth, they surround them with esteem, they make it known how good they are and throw the cloak of charity over their imperfections or infirmities. They are phalanxes, these bodies which never let themselves be breached on any side.

(Yenveux V, 223)

REST

365 — To **Father Suzanne**, April 13, 1823.

Before all else, whatever the precautions you may have taken to ward off the blow, I must scold you and very seriously. Do you want then to be the misfortune of my life? Destined to precede you to the tomb, what would I become if you condemned me to survive you? What sorrow would be comparable to mine? Who could console me? You know full well I would have no more happiness on this earth. Eh bien! why do you behave in such a manner so as to shorten your days? How is it that after the hard exertions you made at the mission of Tallard, after the fatigues and sufferings of the mission of Lauzet, where you had to struggle against hell and all the elements as well, the inclemency of weather being so rigorous that the people of that region could scarcely bear it, you go back to Tallard and rest yourself by preaching again twice a day and forget the care of your health to the point of confessing thirty hours without stopping! And you would wish me, my child, not to be appalled by such behaviour! You may

very well say you are not tired at all, that you eat and sleep well, that does not suffice to appease me, such excess is destroying your existence. I do not wish you to expose yourself to the consequences that can result. That is to be understood in the future once and for all.

(Jeancard 380-381; Rey I, 458)

366 — To Father Tempier, April 13, 1826.

Night and day, I keep thinking of the strenuous work of our Fathers and I cannot but be uneasy. It is impossible for them to stand such a strain. I am very, very distressed. How long will it last, this Jubilee so highly esteemed by our pious town of Aix? I picture to myself Suzanne forcing his voice to fill the great church of St. Saviour; how his poor chest must suffer! And Courtès will be straining himself too even though the church he preaches in is not as large. We must not dream of adding any other work whatever to what they are already doing. It is your concern to plan this. It will be absolutely necessary, and I rigidly insist on it that they rest for a whole month after

such excessive efforts. When I say rest, I mean a complete rest from preaching for those who have been engaged in it for a long time and also for those who have been working beyond their strength even though their period of work was shorter. No matter what requests are made, you must simply refuse, and don't be afraid to give the reason. People must learn that men are not made of iron, and even iron wears away.

(Missions 1872, 298-299)

367 — **To Father Mye, September 7, 1826.**

I knew that you would have been extremely sorry to leave Cévennes. That country is attractive to missionaries who are hungry for the salvation of souls. However, in the plans you propose to me, I do not see any provision for rest. It is as necessary as work. There is no doubt that I prefer you applying your zeal on behalf of the poor abandoned mountain people rather than waste your time with the proud inhabitants of disdainful cities. But once again, I can not dispense you from taking the rest that is your due by natural right.

(Yenveux I, 3)*

368 — To Father Honorat, March 13, 1827.

After the hardships of difficult missions, is it not natural that I require you to take a rest? How could I not be annoyed that you are engaged in some very hard work and what is more, to see you ready to take on new trying tasks? There is no consideration here that holds good. I would have wished that you had refused everything people were indiscreet enough to propose to you except to ask them to have recourse to me. Now, I will let you have the Jubilee of the children which will tire you more than you think, but nothing more. After that, I absolutely want you to take a rest and study: we have to know how to shut our door at the proper time.

(Yenveux I, 4)*

369 — To Father Honorat in mission at Condoulet, January 29, 1828.

You have hardly returned from Sabran, and there you are gone to Condoulet. Why, my dear friend? This kind of zeal is not in line with good sense. You are all young and after a mission, you need some rest, fifteen

days would not have been too much. I do not allow you to take a shorter break between that of Condoulet and the one you plan to take at Fourquet.

I end by imploring you to take care of your fellow-brothers and to take care of yourself.

(*Yenveux I, 4**)

370 — **To Father Honorat, February 21, 1828.**

My dear Father Honorat, on another desk I had begun writing you a letter that will be posted after this one. It is urgent that you find my instructions on your arrival at Nimes. *In primis et ante omnia*: rest, rest, rest. Your primary duty is to procure it for your collaborators. So arrange things as you like, but as long as you are young, you will fix a fifteen days' break between one mission and the other. Never undertake to do more than you can.

(*Yenveux I, 10**)

371 — **To Father Honorat, March 4, 1828.**

You will notice from what precedes that I have never changed my mind on the ques-

tion of rest. You feel the need for it more than when you decided to leave so quickly for Condoulet. No matter how much you do, be convinced that you will always have much to do; so, it is not worth killing yourself. As I see it, killing oneself would be worth it only if by doing so one would finish all there is to do.

(Yenveux I, 7)*

**372 — To Father Guibert, resting at Nimes,
March 18, 1828.**

I am sincerely pleased, my dearest Father Guibert, at the satisfaction you are experiencing and the improvement you think you notice in your health. I am not yet crowing about a victory, nor do I cease to make my recommendations that you do not overstep the mark even slightly. Do not forget even for a moment that you have not been sent there to work but to relax. The least fatigue you incur would place you outside of obedience and the good that may result therefrom would not be in order. Resist every enticement of this nature. Having gone back to Nimes for Easter, you must

not think of starting other missions, because all our Fathers need rest. You must be firm and make the Bishop understand that preaching missions is an extremely tiring task and that they cannot last the whole year.

Missionaries need a prolonged rest for the body and tranquillity in the interior of their holy house for the spirit and their soul. Our Rules must be observed on this point just as in other matters. Collaborate wholeheartedly to bring about perfect regularity in your house.

(Yenveux I, 9)*

**373 — To the Fathers of Nimes on mission,
December 1, 1828.**

I shall not cease from recommending that you take care of your physical strength. Do not go to any excess. Such a thought is not from God. In the exercise of one's zeal, one must be careful to discern what comes from God. Hold back Father Honorat who must be restrained and who usually feels the effects of his imprudent acts, since he has less strength than will. In all things, do

not overload yourselves with work and do not think that you are wasting your time when you are taking a rest.

(Yenveux I, printed, 169)

374 — Supplement to the Act of Visitation of Billens, concerning especially Father Mille, superior, August 26, 1831.

It would be impossible for him to prove adequate to all the tasks imposed on him, if he did not give his body its needed rest. When a person does not sleep enough, he feels heavy the whole day, and does not have the full use of all his faculties. In that case, in spite of oneself, a person gets into a kind of torpor and as long as this lasts, a person does almost no work or what he decides to do is done badly. Everything suffers as a result of this state from which one cannot get out.

(Yenveux VII, 137)

375 — Act of Visitation of the house of N.D. du Laus, May 28, 1834.

We realize that after the toils of the missions, our Fathers need some relief, and cer-

tainly their health is too precious in our view that we should ever refuse to grant it to them. However it is important that in these periods of care, obedience and the spirit of mortification, in a word, the Rule, be given their rightful place.

(Copy. Post. DM IX 4)

376 — **To Father Delpauch, at Bordeaux, December 10, 1856.**

Don't think, my dear son, that I am ignorant of what you are doing. On the contrary, I follow you in all your evangelical excursions; I must thank God for the good you are accomplishing by his grace. However I would like to convince you that you should not exhaust yourself as you do. I excuse myself to the Cardinal. It costs him nothing to urge you, to tell you all the time: Go ahead! Go ahead! For my part, I maintain that you should not tempt God by working beyond your strength. So moderate your enthusiasm and resist the pressure that is exerted on you. No one is obliged to do more than what can be reasonably asked of him. You know yourself that you are wearing yourself out before time in the job you

are made to do. God has established a day of rest for each week. This teaches us that we need to take a rest in everything. Hence take a break between your missions and now that you have a couple of minutes, use them in a way that will relax you. Do not give them any separate work which will leave all that you have been doing till now weigh on you, but let them do part of your work. This is how I understand this matter.

(Mss. Post.)

HEALTH

**377 — To Father Mye, superior at Nimes,
June 19, 1825.**

Do not forget that one has to preach in a loud voice to be heard.

I do not say to you: love each other well, this recommendation would be ridiculous. But I do say to you: take care of each other and let each look after the health of all.

(Yenveux V, 210)

378 — To Father Courtès, July 15, 1827.

Take care of yourself and take great care of everyone, for sickness ruins regularity.

(Yenveux VI, 120)

379 — To Father E. Semeria, at Jaffna, May 9, 1848.

Take care of Fr. Keating if he has spat blood: you must give him all the dispensations that his delicate constitution makes necessary. Fr. Arnoux played the same trick on us when he went to say one of his first Masses at Notre-Dame de la Garde. So Fr. Keating will see that accidents happen everywhere. As for you, do not do anything that is above your strength. Remember that you have a delicate constitution, and have no scruples about allowing yourself all the comforts necessary for the accomplishment of your mission.

(Mss. Post.)

380 — To Father E. Semeria, at Jaffna, September 19, 1851.

I entirely agree with your arrangements to look after your health in all circum-

stances. Yes, there is no lack of privations and fatigue inseparable from your ministry, and do not add any extra burden that could compromise your health, which is so necessary for you to be able to do your duty.

(Mss. Post.)

381 — **To Father E. Semeria, at Jaffna, July 2, 1852.**

The news you give me of the poor health of good Fr. Ciamin distresses me greatly. Since he is coughing and spitting blood, his vocal organs must rest completely, even if it means that he has to write on a piece of wood with chalk... Do not expose yourselves to the heat of the sun, but take all the precautions that people who care for their health take in that country. One has to know how to adapt one's way of life to the country one is in.

(Mss. Post.)

382 — **To Father Luigi, at Vico, January 17, 1856.**

I have just been told, my dear son, that you have been somewhat ill. For mercy's

sake, take care of yourself, postpone your missions until you have fully recovered. Excess of work before one has fully recovered may be fatal; therefore don't do anything imprudent. By postponing your work you are performing an act that is more meritorious than going on mission at the risk of reducing yourself to the state of not being able to do any more.

(Mss. Post.)

383 — To Father de l'Hermitte, at N.D. de Cléry, April 14, 1856.

Nevertheless I will tell you that you are not taking care of yourself sufficiently. I ask you as a favour, as if I were giving you an order to judge yourself not according to the work there is to do but on your strength. On this point we must take a reasoned stand and then not deviate from it... What can we do about it? We must be such as God wants us to be. Let us be satisfied with our lot, let us take care not to complain. What is certain is that he does not ask us to do anything beyond our strength. This is what I would like to impress on you in order to

moderate your zeal and to keep you resting even when you see there is more to do than you possibly can. No consideration must make you hesitate on this matter. The people, the Clergy, the Bishop may say what they want, don't do any more because of that. Note that the one who gives you this counsel, which is not simple advice, is not a person who is accustomed to taking care of himself, nor a friend of excessive caution. I have only to inspire you to more confidence in the decision which I give you after having reflected upon it.

(Mss. Post.)

384 — **To Father Gustave Richard, in England, August 22, 1856.**

My dear Father Richard, when will you cease to give me sorrow? What a beautiful day it will be when you are able to tell me you are well! Ah! if I had to offer my blood to obtain this, how gladly would I offer it. Dear son, may the good God hear my prayers! For you each day I beg health from Him who well knows how to employ it for His glory. In the meantime, I exhort you to remain completely in a state of rest — do not let

yourself be fatigued in any way. I had learned with pleasure that a charitable Christian had received you into his home to be looked after but I am told today that you are in Dublin. Refrain from letting yourself be tempted to do the least amount of work. In vain may anyone expose some need, it is to be as if you were not there. Reply with the explicit ban that I convey to you to do anything except say mass. The good God is sending us this trial, I know, but often it is our own fault.

When you do more than you can, you do not act according to reason. God does not bless imprudence or excess. One who otherwise would be able to fulfil his ministry with moderation incapacitates himself to render any service through having wished to do too much. You still have time to regain your former fitness, but you must have patience and resignation.

(Mss. Post.)

385 — **To Bishop E. Semeria, Vicar Apostolic of Jaffna, October 10, 1857.**

In Ceylon your health is deteriorating cruelly. Find out if you could make some

change in the diet. Give yourselves what healthy Europeans eat. Stop only briefly in un-healthy territory and do not set up a house there as you have done at Mantotte, for example, which seems to me a plague-ridden place. Start from the great principle that one is not asked to do more than one's strength allows for, and that when there are few workers, as in your case, you have to be careful with yourselves. Do not imagine that I can send you the men you ask for. You will only ever have young missionaries whose strength you will have to take care of.

(Mss. Post.)

386 — To Father Bonjean, in Ceylon, October 16, 1858.

I shall be brief, my dear Fr. Bonjean, because I have much to write, but no matter: it is enough for me to express to you in a few words the feelings which I hold so strongly for you. I bless God for your fidelity in replying to the grace of your vocation and all the good which has been brought about through your ministry in the family of the holy Immaculate Mother proves to

you how much God is able to bring his call to fruition. The only thing which causes me concern is that I hear that you are tired. This proves that you must know how to place limits even on the most legitimate zeal. Never work beyond your strength; you have to last out for the great service that the Church expects from our Congregation and for the salvation of those poor souls that are so much abandoned in your beautiful island where infidelity and heresy still hold sway.

(Mss. Post.)

THE SICK

387 — **To Father Tempier, from Turin, May 24, 1826.**

Father Marcou's sickness.

We must exert our charity to the full and give him every possible care, but indeed, there is no need to say this to you. Even if we have to sell our shoes, we must supply him with every possible comfort. If his parents wish to take him to their home,

do not agree. It is among his brothers in religion that he ought to find care and attention, day and night, everything he needs, whether it be material or spiritual. One thing in particular I would urge upon you is to take all necessary precautions. If our poor dear Marcou's disease proves to be phthisis, you must mark all the articles he uses so that the other young Fathers may not be exposed to infection. After that, no, I should say before that and before all else, we must continually ask the good God to allow us to keep this good priest with us, if it be His holy will.

(Missions 1872, 319)

388 — To Father Courtès, May 31, 1826.

I need not recommend to you that, if Father Marcou comes to Aix, you must care for him more than he could be cared for in his parent's house, even if you have to sell the dinner-sets and the chalices. I don't think the climate of Marseilles suits his condition, the atmosphere of Aix will be better for him. Only see to it that some place is reserved to serve as an infirmary.

(Yenveux VI, 113)

389 — To Father Courtès, June 26, 1826.

I do not like at all us removing our sick from our communities when they are in danger of death. They have the right to a higher degree of care, and the consolation of dying in the arms of one's brothers means something to a good religious who knows the value of supernatural assistance.

(Rey I, 395)

390 — To Father Tempier, June 24, 1828.

Here we are, then, threatened with another misfortune: we will be losing our angelic Father Arnoux. Why did you agree to have him sent to Fuveau? What do you expect from such a change? It is the most wretched of all country places, without any shade or walks, dry and scorching. Would it not have been better to keep this angel at Aix, and if you absolutely wanted him to breathe country air, don't we have l'Enclos, which excels all the Fuveaus of the world? I don't like our sick, especially when they are ready for Heaven, leaving our houses at the risk of dying without the assistance of

their brothers. If there is still time, have this decision changed; it is not according to my taste; or rather, it is not at all proper.

(*Yenveux VI, 132*)

391 — **To Father J.A. Ciamin, at Jaffna, April 9, 1853.**

My dear Fr. Ciamin, I do not want to wait until the two missionaries whom I am sending to help your mission leave, which will be very soon, before replying to your letter, which was enclosed with the last letter I received from Fr. Semeria. I was distressed to hear from you a confirmation that you are in a poor state of health, but at the same time I must tell you that I was greatly consoled by the sentiments that you expressed to me in it. Yes, my dear Father, it is the Holy Spirit who has inspired you to say to me what you say, which is so true, so harmonious with the divine vocation to which you have been called by a special favour of the divine mercy. I do hope that you will recover your health although your doctors, from what you tell me, have decided that it will be otherwise; but if it were part

of the decrees of Divine Providence that your exile on earth should be shortened so that you might sooner enjoy the blessed possession of God, an early reward for your apostolic labours, and yet the final end of all our hopes and the faithful accomplishment of the promise that the Lord made to the faithful servants who, like you, have obeyed his voice and carried out the task that he has imposed on them, well, if the good Lord did wish to call you to himself, would it not be a mark of predestination if you were to die in the arms of the Congregation? We shall never be able to thank the Lord enough for having preferred us above all others in granting us such a grace. This is a miracle of which we have been witnesses ever since the Congregation came into being. All who have died in her bosom have died like the predestined, and the good Lord seems to have wished to make them aware of this privilege by making them feel it in their souls. All of them without exception said they knew no terms to express the happiness they felt in dying as sons of Mary in the Congregation to which the mercy of God had called them. The last subject we lost, a young Irish Oblate for whom we had the greatest hopes, did not

cease to repeat this with holy joy, like those who had gone before him into glory. There is nobody, even down to the lay-brothers, who does not share in this consolation. We have lost three of them in a row, and they have confirmed all our members in this sweet conviction. And so, my dear Fr. Ciamin, whatever happens, you will live and die as a child of Mary in the Congregation in which you made your vows *in aeternum*...

And so let us detach ourselves completely from the earth when we are warned that our hour is approaching. This grace is not given to everybody, and the advantages that it brings us are immense, and so let us be sure that we profit from it. Here we never cease praying for you, for you are bound to us by the bonds of the most heartfelt charity. We would like to keep you on earth so that you might still be able to work for the glory of God and the sanctification of souls, and if God has decided to crown you, we will weep for a beloved brother, without however lamenting the fact that he has come sooner than us to port in order to enter into eternal possession of God.

(*Mss. Post.*)

THE DECEASED

392 — **To Father Courtès, July 22, 1828.**

After Father Jourdan (+ 20.4.1823), Father Marcou (+ 20.8.1826), Brother Dumolard (+ 9 7. 1828), Father Arnoux (July 13) « breathed his last, after a gentle, peaceful agony similar to that of saints ». Despite the grief caused in seeing his sons who had given such hopes die so young, the Founder's faith inspired him to pen these beautiful lines:

Here we are with four of them in Heaven! That is already a nice community! They are the first stones, the foundation stones, of the edifice that is to be built in the heavenly Jerusalem; they are before God bearing the sign, the kind of character proper to our Institute, the vows common to all its members, the firm habit of the same virtues. We are linked to them by the bonds of a special charity. They are still our brothers and we are theirs. They now live in our mother-house, our high place. The prayers and the love they retain for us will one day draw us to them and we shall live in our place of rest together with them. I presume that our community up above must have its place very close to our Patroness; I see them be-

side Mary Immaculate and consequently in the vicinity of our Lord Jesus Christ whom they have followed on this earth and whom they are contemplating with delight. We shall receive our portion of this fullness if we prove ourselves worthy of them through our fidelity in the constant practice of that Rule which has helped them arrive at where they are. Their holy death is, in my opinion, a great confirmation of these Rules; these latter have thereby received a new seal of divine approbation. The gate of Heaven is at the end of the road on which we are travelling. We have every reason to be ecstatic with admiration when we reflect on all these things. Speak on these things to your community; make it the subject of your conversations with Father Suzanne who should be at Aix today. May some effective and lasting resolutions result therefrom.

(Yenveux VI, 157)

393 — **To Father Guibert, July 29, 1828.**

You see, our dear Dumolard, who gave us such great hopes, who had a love for the

Congregation such as can hardly be found among many older Oblates, has been taken away from us. Our blessed Father Arnoux, a model of all virtues, who observed the Rules heroically, so spiritually minded and holy, is going to possess Heaven at the age of twenty five years and five months, leaving us as afflicted by his loss as we are edified by his stay among us. I don't know which sentiment is the stronger, but I am in turn afflicted and consoled, sad and pleased. Being separated from one's own is more painful than we think, but having the certitude that they are in Heaven and that they arrived there by the road on which we travel, oh! what a consoling thought!

(Yenveux IX, 84)

394 — Diary, December 15, 1838.

After copying in his diary a letter from Father Magnan, written at the bedside of the young Brother Morandini, the Founder adds:

I have no regret over the trouble taken to copy these lines to the glory of one of our dear predestined sons. I pray, I medi-

tate, I rejoice, I offer to God a painful sacrifice and at the same time, I console myself in preparing the material praising him for the future edification of the family, to see all those whom the good Lord calls to him from the midst of our little Congregation dying in such a holy manner. Had this son, this angel died among the Jesuits, for example, they would have made of him a Berchmans, a Stanislaus, an Aloysius Gonzaga; why then should we not exalt his glory in all the places where we pass — this is how I call our houses — why should we not loudly bless the Lord for the great mercy he shows us in granting our men the privilege of dying as the predestined. Pons, Suzanne, Marcou, Arnoux, Dumolard and all our other brothers, answer from Heaven above! Has not your vocation to the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary been for you the sign of your predestination? O my God, may it be so for all who will serve to the end under this same banner, and may he who had gathered them together in your name, at his turn, when the day has come, die a death like their holy death, and may he rejoin them in glory to love them in God for all eternity still more perfectly than he loves

them on earth where he nevertheless loves them so very much.

(Mss. Post.)

395 — **Diary**, July 6, 1844.

Anniversary of the episcopal ordination of my saintly Uncle. I have offered the Holy Mass for him, not that I think he still needs suffrages, but only as an act of homage due to his memory. Moreover, in my view, prayers offered on earth for the souls we may consider to be still dependent on God's justice but have, in fact, been already glorified, are never a loss to them. God to whom this act of charity is pleasing, rewards the soul of the just person who had been commended to his mercy by elevating it still higher in glory simply through his all-powerful bounty. This just soul is exalted by God's infinite goodness because, in its regard, the other divine attribute has run its course, so to speak. This thought is completely in line with the ideas God has given us regarding the relationship that exists among the members of that great family whose Father he is. It tends to strengthen

the bonds that unite us, and encourages us never to cease praying for our brothers; it nourishes our hope and helps to give us a high view of God's omnipotence and infinite goodness as well as of the incomprehensible happiness of the Saints whom he had called to possess the glory that is nothing other than the knowledge and the very vision of God who is the Saints' happiness, though not all of them enjoy him in the same degree. Basing myself on the notion regarding the participation of God's attributes that he himself has deigned to grant us on this earth, I have no fear in asserting that, throughout all eternity, as a result of his infinite goodness towards these souls that are so dear to him and without any new merit on their part, he will raise to higher glory by manifesting himself to them more and more, but all the while keeping the distance between them that their different merits deserved when the Supreme Judge had rewarded them according to his promise and in virtue of this promise, so that it will always be true to say: *in domo patris mei mansiones multae sunt* (Jn. 14:2).

(*Mss. Post.*)

396 — **Diary**, December 22, 1860.

Sad news of the death of our Father Genin. The superior of Talence who had warned me in a previous letter about his desperate situation, informed me of his holy death today. All his fellow-Oblates who were present when he renewed his vows could not hold back their tears in hearing him say that he is happy to die in the bosom of the Congregation and to be able to renew his vows, in my presence, so to speak, that is before my picture which he had by his bed. He had been heroically patient and calm in the midst of excruciating pain which he suffered during the last fifteen days of his life.

This is how our little militant family on earth nourishes the already numerous community in Heaven. May these dear Brothers whom God calls to himself one after the other, not lose sight of us once they have reached the summit of happiness; we greatly need help and increase to be adequate to the work that is waiting everywhere. We, on our part, do not forget them when they depart from us. Lest there be some obstacle to their immediate entry into Heaven, we accompany them certainly with our sorrow,

but especially with our suffrages. The entire Congregation gets busy praying, and indulgences, good deeds and the holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered several times by each of us will open to them the gate of Heaven if perchance their holy death in the bosom of the Congregation and the renewal of their profession before leaving this world, were not sufficient to liquidate their debts towards God.

(Rey II, 825)

SEPARATION FROM THE CONGREGATION

397 — **To Father Courtès, June 1, 1823.**

« The news of this apostasy (of Father Deblieu) has affected me more than the death of Father Jourdan... This is dreadful ».

One is struck by blows like this as by lightning and one finds oneself in the state of mind of these princes of our days who, after a new defection, look once more about them to see who will be the next to leave.

It would perhaps be as well if we were to compare ourselves, in this circumstance, with our divine Master who asked the disciples who still remained beside him, after the shameful defection of the Capharnaïtes: « And you also, would you wish to abandon me? » (Jn. 6:67). However sorrowful our position, I pity infinitely more the traitors who, not having been stopped by the infallible word of him who said that anyone who turned back after having put his hand to the plough, is not worthy of the kingdom of heaven (Lk. 9:62), secretly meditate, consent interiorly and finally commit an execrable perjury... Civil laws used to punish very severely similar behaviour. Today divine justice delays applying the penalty. A crime like this is so alien to my mind that I truly do not know how to prevent its execution. I could only implore the Lord during the whole course of the procession today to avert this calamity from us and still more from him who thinks of doing it and by that fact itself is not innocent of it.

(Yenveux VIII, 258)

398 — To Father Courtès, October 9, 1823,
at midnight.

Although I was expecting for a long time, my dear friend, the apostasy whereof you announce the imminent explosion, this infamy is so monstrous that I can scarcely persuade myself that it be possible. This is the end result of so much patience and support given to a member more imperfect than it is possible to conceive. The circumstance that this man chooses is a refinement of perfidy. God will finish by making (him) an example for I do not know of a greater outrage to divinity, to fidelity to an oath, to religion which is treated as a plaything. The doctors of [Fréjus] will decide what they wish; the Bishop will do what pleases him; I, if God does not give me other insights, will not unbind this guilty one... Vows made at the foot of the altar and in the presence of Jesus Christ whom one takes as witness, vows renewed in circumstances that not one of us is able to forget, after considerations and protestations which have never been made by anyone, vows ratified a third time in the greatest joy and peace which is shared with everyone, such vows are not pronounced by

surprise and without reflection. I repeat, let whoever dispense from them who wishes; as for me, unless the good God gives me other insights, I will do nothing.

Adieu, my dear beloved, your sentiments are for my heart truly a consolation; but, in this painful circumstance, it costs me much not to be surrounded by all my true children so that we may help each other mutually to bear a misfortune which is common to us, since it weighs on the Society.

(Rambert I, 375-376)

399 — To Father Mye, October 31, 1823.

I thank you, dear Mye, for the consideration you have had in writing to me concerning the affliction in which you could only suppose I find myself. So many blows were struck from without, I simply was not paying attention. But today now that Satan has succeeded in putting us through the sieve and, shaking his sifter with violence, has made to pass with the straw some of the grain which ought, it seems, to remain in the granaries of the Father of the family, I am affected to the point of saying like

Our Lord: *tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem* (Mt. 26:38). I cannot reconcile myself to the idea that one can trifle with what is most holy under frivolous pretexts and perhaps for reasons less than edifying. And while I see Turks die rather than not live up to their word, when in doing so they invoke the name of God, priests will falsify promises of quite another kind, made knowingly and willingly to Jesus Christ, taking him as witness and under his own eyes! It is frightful...

(*Rambert I, 376*)

400 — To Father Tempier, November 26, 1825.

The very morning of his arrival in Rome, the Founder had learnt via letter of Father Tempier of the defection of Father Vachon.

The sorrowful effect that the sinister news had on my soul. It is a very severe trial, I must admit in the isolation in which I find myself; I have already uttered my sighs to the Lord as lovingly as I possibly could at the benediction that I have been

to receive in the church of the Gesù, a few hours after my arrival in this capital of the Christian world. I know we are not the only ones subject to such misfortunes; there is no society which does not have several of them; but our little number renders these blows most painful and the dispositions of minds most ominous. We must nevertheless not fail to submit ourselves to the decrees of Divine Providence; the humiliation which results therefrom for the whole Society is perhaps a way more useful than prosperity, and we ought to profit from it to become more perfect and more faithful to the observance of our Rules and the spirit of our Institute. Such is the conclusion I draw from all these woes which overwhelm us.

(Missions 1872, 172-173)

401 — To Father Martin, at Billens (Switzerland), May 10, 1837.

I would very much like to tell you *viva voce* what I content myself in writing to you. Become more and more worthy of your vocation. We can never do enough to be grateful for all the good the good Lord helps

us to accomplish through a special privilege. If our number is small, no doubt we must lay the blame partly on the evils of the day, and on the laxity which infests so many mercenaries who wish to serve the Church only for the temporal profit which they derive. We must also admit, however, that we have been reduced by the infidelity and lack of virtue of a great number of those who had been called like you and who by their secret prevarication have deserved to fall into a state of real corruption, which will invariably bring God's malediction upon them. Not all have become apostates, in this sense that they did not cross the threshold abruptly; however, they have all really betrayed their trust by placing themselves in such a state as to be expelled at their own risk and danger. I make an exception for only one whose eccentricity excuses him, in my view. This is Father Pachiaudi. Except for him, I consider all the others to be in a state of damnation. Their unfaithfulness and the scandal they cause to the Church are permanent. I definitely will not absolve them from such a great crime. All should know this. They may want to delude themselves but no one can make fun of God

without being punished and even people do not allow themselves to be misled. When I used the word « corruption » above, that is correct because I understand it as corruption of morality for some and for others, the corruption of spirit reached by violating principles, by distorting duties, disregarding authority, gambling with the most sacred commitments here below, trampling under foot the vows. It is a horror, a monstrosity, a villainy, no matter under what mantle one may want to cover it. I appeal to God for the judgment day since my voice is powerless on earth to keep them faithful to their duties. I did not think of writing these things to you, but *Spiritus Dei ubi vult spirat*.

(Diary, May 10, 1873, Mss. Post.)

402 — To Father Santoni, Provincial of Canada, March 12, 1852.

You ask me that Fr. Baudrand be expelled. I would have liked some explanations why so rigorous a measure was requested... If he has deserved this punishment, which

is truly a condemnation to death, I would not refuse it, even though to pass this sentence always costs me a great deal. What a lot of defections! What has become of the vows and the oath in America? Does it not seem that one can be released for the slightest misdemeanor, under the frailest pretext? They are breaking their sacred bonds on their own authority; they leave as soon as the whim takes them; they have no horror of apostasy, which places them in a habitual state of mortal sin and brings down on them a terrible excommunication. In spite of this, in the deplorable state of soul that they are in, they ascend the steps of the altar, they are accepted by bishops to occupy posts almost in the same places in which the Congregation that they have deserted is established. These are dreadful scandals. For our part, we must be on our guard against making these defections easier by giving way inopportunately. One must take care of the weaker subjects, and avoid breaking the thread by which they still hang on to life; in a word, one must do everything that one can to avoid coming to this extremity. My Council, which is to pronounce on this question, entirely shares my views; and it is not

likely that they will consent to Fr. Baudrand's departure.

(Yenyeux VIII, 265)

403 — **To Father Vincens**, September 21, 1854.

Concerning a Father who was too independent and refused to accept an assignment.

I would rather advise him to leave the Congregation. I would like to propose this to all who disturb its good harmony by their eccentric ways. Among us all must be of one mind just as they should be of one heart. Sometimes we come across people without a heart, and these have a mind of their own stamp too.

(Yenveux III, 127)

404 — **To Charles Baret**, November 8, 1855.

Resolve, all of you, to make reparation through redoubled zeal and regularity, for the injuries inflicted on your Mother. Little by little, all that is unworthy of you needs to be expelled like impurities of which the

body must be purged. Only one regret remains, namely having been too patient with them too long in the hope that they would improve, but experience has proved to us that this is impossible to obtain.

The wound in their souls is so deep, so putrid. One would not believe it if one had touched it with one's finger. A book can be written about their unworthy behaviour. In such degraded souls, there is neither honour nor delicacy, nor feeling; their's is a warped conscience that would swallow camels just like flies. All of them more or less compromise our Congregation.

(Yenveux VIII, 303)

405 — To Bishop Guigues, Provincial of Canada, April 24, 1858.

As for Fr. Bourassa, I am desolated by his persistence in leaving the ark, and may God grant that he does not suffer total shipwreck. It is always a great infidelity to come to the point that he has reached. I have given him as much rein as I could, but will he take advantage of this kindness to stay firm in his vocation, and has he not in his

heart committed to the full the apostasy from which I meant to save him?

What a responsibility will be on his shoulders if, as you say, you cannot replace him in his work in the docks except imperfectly. Those shameful soldiers then never think of death! Do those words *redde rationem villicationis tuae* not strike fear into them? Their consciences must have become utterly numb! May God grant them light to save them!

(Copy. Reg. lettres 1855-1863, Post. DM 10)

406 — To Father Rouge, in Montreal, July 8, 1858.

You ask me for a dispensation from your vows; you have committed a grave fault in deciding to follow this idea. Can it be that the undertakings that you made solemnly before God do not have to last as long as your life? Did you not take the oath, *usque ad mortem perseveraturum*, etc.?

And can one play with God and with what is most sacred, after the sacraments, in our holy religion? Was it because you saw apostates around you that you have been

tempted to become one yourself? May God preserve you from that, my dear son! I have too much love for you in my heart, although you do me the outrage of doubting it, for me to wish you to assassinate yourself; I would be killing myself as well if I were to prevaricate in that way. Have I the power to grant you such a dispensation without canonically valid reasons? What would have become of us if it were enough to feel a certain discontent, to have come through one's own fault to find the holy yoke of religion heavy, for one to wish to break the bonds that bind us to God in the Congregation to which the mercy of the Lord has called us, he who is the receiver of our vows and oaths, who has adopted us on the basis of those oaths and to whom we belong irrevocably? No, my dear son, it is not possible.

Your position has become difficult and disagreeable where you are, but there are ways of remedying that. The whole earth is ours, I might say, in a certain sense, that is to say that wherever there is a house of the Congregation, you will be at home.

(Copy. Reg. lettres 1855-1863, Post. DM 10)

VII. THE FORMATION (1)

407 — Preface to the Constitutions and Rules.

The sight of these evils has so touched the hearts of certain priests, zealous for the glory of God, men with an ardent love for the Church, that they are willing to give their lives, if need be, for the salvation of souls.

They are convinced that if priests could be formed, afire with zeal for men's salvation, priests not given to their own interests, solidly grounded in virtue — in a word, apostolic men deeply conscious of the need to reform themselves, who would labour with all the resources at their command to

(1) On this topic, cfr. MARIO CAMARDA, *La formazione dell'Oblato negli scritti del beato E. de Mazenod*, in *Quarderni di Vermicino*, no. 12, Frascati, 1982, 130 pp.

convert others — then there would be ample reason to believe that in a short while people who had gone astray might be brought back to their long-unrecognized responsibilities. « Take great care about what you do and what you teach », was Paul's charge to Timothy, « Always do this, and thus you will save both yourself and those who listen to you » (1 Tim. 4:16).

How, indeed, did our Lord Jesus Christ proceed when he undertook to convert the world? He chose a number of apostles and disciples whom he himself trained in piety, and he filled them with his Spirit. These men he sent forth, once they had been schooled in his teaching, to conquer the world which, before long, was to bow to his holy rule.

(Rules of 1826, Mss. Post.)

VOCATIONS (1)

408 — To his mother, June 29, 1808.

My good mother, before informing you of the plans the Lord, in his mercy, has for me, I wanted to ask my uncle to speak to you about them in order to make you see things in their true perspective lest in your affection which I have always experienced, you get unnecessarily alarmed. No matter what pains one may take to explain one's ideas in writing, it is difficult to foresee all the objections or even the different ways in which something may be understood. That is why I had entrusted my uncle, who is capable of appreciating God's ways, to acquaint you with the plans of our Master, whom all of us are bound to obey under pain of damnation; and to reply to the objections you may make; in a word, by exposing my reasons to you to bring you to give your consent to a project that certainly comes from

(1) Other texts in:

— G. BLANCHETTE, *La pensée de Mgr de Mazenod sur les moyens de recrutement*, in *Etudes Oblates*, t. 19 (1960), pp. 196-218.

God, since it has passed through the tests he requires in regard to every apparently extraordinary inspiration, and has been approved by all who hold his place in my regard.

(Mss. Post. F.B. 1-7)

409 — **To his mother, April 6, 1809.**

I was grieved... to see that you find it so difficult to see me enter a state of life to which God is calling me; that you consider a disaster what should be the object of your joy. It is a great illusion to think that a person can save himself more easily in a state where there are fewer duties to fulfil when God has destined us for another. The graces he grants are in proportion to one's fidelity in responding to them, and if everyone reasoned in the way you suggest to me, one would be in a very bad situation indeed... Furthermore, we can sanctify ourselves only there where God wants us. But there is little chance of success. First of all, it is not so true as you may think because it is very certain that there is still much good to be accomplished; and even if during

his life, a person could offer only one soul the means of salvation, he would have been more than amply rewarded for all his troubles. In a word, before all else, we must obey God's voice, count on his graces and do one's best with their help, to plant, to water, as Saint Paul says, and leave the growth to the care of the Father of the Family. You tell me that I must reflect at length before taking such a serious decision. Certainly a person must reflect and test himself, but must this test last a life-time? Never has a decision been studied more maturely and for a longer period than the one I am going to take next Christmas, when I will very likely be ordained Sub-deacon.

(Mss. Post. F. B. 1-7)

410 — **To Brother Guibert**, June 26, 1823.

I admit, my dear good Guibert, your letter had palpably affected me. This was to the point that I did not have fortitude enough to write to you and that I needed to pour my heart into the bosom of our mutual Friend, the only confidant I could choose in this anguish that I might describe

by calling it excessive. How could you wish, my dear friend, that it be otherwise, persuaded as I am that the good God has given you to us in answer to our prayers, that he has called you like the apostles with the most evident signs of a truly divine vocation to follow him and to serve him in the ministry which resembles most that which he prescribed for his apostles, with whose work he willed to associate you.

(Yenveux IX, 101)

**411 — To Fathers Mye and Honorat and
Brother Guibert, June 2, 1825.**

After expressing his joy on receiving the good news of their arrival and settlement at Nimes, close to the Seminary, the Founder gives some prudent advice, and adds:

Without seeming to make a point of it, adopt a very amiable manner with the seminarists. Father Mye must take care not to bring up the subject openly, but my whole desire and my hope is that some of these young people, touched by your good example, your regularity and the sublimity of the ministry to which you are devoted, may be-

come attracted and desirous of joining our ranks. Say then with the best will in the world: *ut in messem tuam mittas operarios secundum cor tuum* (Mt. 9:38; Lk. 10:2). I wanted you so much to arrive at Nîmes before the departure of the seminarists; it was important that they see and regard you closely. You must not however be with them insatiably. Be careful never to enter into any theological discussion. It is not yet time for that. Speak sometimes of the charm of our life, of the happiness we enjoy, of the marvels which the Lord works through our ministry, but without seeming too much to say that one speaks in this manner in order to attract them. Indeed we only want those whom the good God sends us.

(*Yenveux II, 12*)

412 — **To Father Templier, April 13, 1826.**

Night and day, I keep thinking of the strenuous work of our Fathers and I cannot but be uneasy. It is impossible for them to stand such a strain... Let us pray earnestly that the Father of the family may send more labourers to cultivate the vineyard which

He has entrusted to our care. It is by the good offices of our holy Mother that we should obtain this blessing so that we may procure the glory of her divine Son. Let us therefore persevere in fervent appeal to her. We would need philosophers and theologians, men who have completed their studies, but such men see elsewhere plums ready to fall into their hands. In the homes of their parents they have nothing to eat but an onion and a crust of bread, but they believe themselves destined to become pillars of the Church. An extraordinary grace would be needed to enlighten them and make them more reasonable.

(*Missions 1872, 298-300*)

**413 — To a priest who applied to join the
Congregation, January 23, 1830.**

Once the Master has made his voice heard, once he has uttered the words: *Sequere me* in our heart, we have only to imitate the Apostles who *relictis retibus et patre*, obeyed him at the very first call. If there are any obstacles, it is up to us to overcome them. With good will, I say will and not

velleity, assisted by grace, we shall reach our goal infallibly. But if one is frightened by difficulties, if one does nothing to overcome them, it is useless to hope that God will send us an Angel to take us by hand.

(*Yenveux VIII, 24*)

414 — **To Father Guigues, superior at N.D. de l'Osier, September 3, 1835.**

We must pray the *Dominum messis* that he send us labourers. The most effective means of having our prayers answered is by being in everything what we should be. This is a duty that is laid on everyone, but it very specially brings an awesome responsibility on superiors who are obliged *sub gravi* to enforce regularity in their communities by their example and authority.

(*Yenveux VII, 162*)

415 — **To Father Vincens, at l'Osier, November 12, 1840.**

You know, my dear Father Vincens, that all we ask God is to send us priests after his heart, who, filled with the holy desire

for the joy of living in conformity with the divine Master's counsels, wish to travel the same path the Apostles and the favoured disciples who followed them had trod. The person you mention in your letter to Father Tempier seems to be of this calibre. The way you praise him places him totally in this category. Hence, I can only bless the Lord for inspiring him to associate himself to a Society of evangelical labourers whose number is not sufficient to reap the great harvest entrusted to it by the Father of the family.

(Copy. Post.)

416 — To Father Dassy, July 17, 1841.

May God grant the hope you give me of seeing some students from Romans come to us. Let not what happened in the diocese of Grenoble where several had manifested their good will but not one kept his promise, happen to this house. When will the major Seminary get under way? Don't they see what your holy ministry is accomplishing? Something more is needed. They must become convinced that among

us they will find not clever men, political aims, etc., but men of God and whatever is needed to lead a life of perfection. For my part, I would like to see some change in the relationships we have with people in the world outside, that we aim more at edifying than at being popular, that our external comportment coincides with what we are internally. This is easy for men like you, imbued as you are with such a good spirit and basically seeking only the glory of God, the welfare of souls and the service of the Church.

(Mss. Post.)

417 — **To Father Baudrand, in Canada, October 1, 1844.**

Is it true that your dioceses of Montreal and Quebec would produce nothing? I know that making known certain miseries which should have been hidden, buried within yourselves, could have turned away some vocations, but now that each will do his duty, it is to be hoped that the good aroma of your virtues will attract some people. That is the point. We must edify so much with

our regularity. our modesty, our charity that souls who seek perfection may be able to count on meeting with such practices amongst us.

I never was able to understand how anyone could lose sight of that fact. It is nevertheless a question of an essential duty which one could not neglect without gravely sinning. You must now regain your courage and make great strides to get to the point which you should have passed long ago.

(Yenveux V, 23)

418 — **To Father Léonard**, April 2, 1847.

Father Léonard Baveux was recalled from Canada in 1846 for a recruiting tour in European Colleges and Seminaries.

Dear Father Léonard, what a man you are! You break open all doors and take each place by storm. Nothing can resist you and if you come across a bishop who wants to save his men, he must forbid you to talk, as did the Archbishop of Chambery, whom I considered to be more generous. On the other hand, the Bishop of Annecy has paid for two. Could anyone be more kind, more

zealous, more disinterested, more Catholic than he, and his good Clergy worthy of him and following his footsteps? What! even the Missionaries are bringing you candidates! I can hardly believe it... You see I am right in wanting you to cover every diocese. Father Burfin has given you wrong advice in deterring you from doing in Grenoble what you are doing everywhere else. Accomplish your mission without worrying about the opinion of others. Keep me always informed... of your success or your setbacks should you encounter any.

(Mss. Post.)

419 — **To Father Léonard**, June 10, 1847.

I have already told you that even if I had the mailing service at my disposal, it would be impossible to catch up with you. You go from conquest to conquest and we will have to enlarge on all sides the houses which are to receive your recruits. I acknowledge that the embarrassment caused by the success of your mission does not induce me to shed tears. I am comforted by the anxiety of our good Father Tempier

who continually tells me: « Please stop this braggart who places us in a desperate situation and will bring about our ruin ». You know, I laugh in his face while he scratches his head and he himself ends up by laughing, saying that you have taken him at his word's worth...

This does not mean that, like you, I don't feel the wrong that you do to our Fathers (of Canada), who have a real need of you. I think, however, it would be turning away from the way of Providence if you were to stop half-way in a mission that is evidently inspired by God. Chosen by the Lord to accomplish what you are doing with so much success, with the Lord's evident blessing, you will ever be the *bene-merente* of the Congregation whose mouth-piece you have been to make it known and to spread it.

(*Mss. Post.*)

420 — **To Father Léonard, October 27, 1847.**

There is no more room to receive the new arrivals. Nor is there any more money to feed them. So evidently we have to strike

our flag however courageous we may be. Lay aside, therefore, your very fine mission, « *Flens dico* ». I confess that I have never had to make a greater sacrifice. To be forced to reject God's help, to turn away the fruitful source that would have so powerfully reinforced all our missions, is hard, is heart-breaking, and this precisely when the field of the Father of the family opens up wider before us. A truce on our regrets! We cannot overstep the limits of what is possible. So let us be resigned. Perhaps the good Lord will provide later. For the time being, put an end to your trip since God has arranged things in that way.

(*Mss. Post.*)

421 — **To Father Vandenberghe, master of novices, April 21, 1855.**

Our needs are extremely great. I am pestered from all sides; there is not one mission that does not require assistance. It is because the field is vast and zeal indefatigable. I was hoping that our holy men in Heaven would obtain from the Father of the family other labourers to work in his vineyard. Apparently God wants to arouse

our fervour through having us feel the need and our trust in his goodness. So let us not be discouraged and let us continue to pray so that we may obtain what we desire so rightly; let us implore the blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph to assist us in our great need.

(Mss. Post.)

422 — **To Father Vincens, May 20, 1855.**

Dear Father Vincens, please hurry up. No matter how little late you are, you will find all the Seminaries closed and we will be missing our aim. You understand why it is important to try this method for replenishing ourselves. Father Vandenberghe sends me word that his novices are going to be down to 19. This is a threat of a natural death. From all sides, I am receiving letters crying for help...

I have spent the whole day in the church. I mean this literally. I write these few lines on my return, but I repeat, as I finish this letter, what I told you when I started it: get going! get going! start your work! You have no time to lose. I think I have given you some leaflets about the Congregation which

you could distribute on your way. I have a few more of them which I could pass on to you, should you need them.

(*Mss. Post.*)

423 — **To Father Tamburini, October 2, 1855.**

I am quite regularly receiving news from all our missions. We very much need some vocations among your students. Our number is not sufficient for the work. Everywhere there are fields to be cultivated, but labourers are lacking. Arouse some zeal in these young hearts. I was only twelve years old when he made the first and very efficacious desire blossom in my heart to devote myself to the missions and work for the conversion of souls. Do not lose sight of this. To make something known, you must speak about it, *ignoti nulla cupido*.

(*Copy. Post.*)

424 — **To Father Paul, parish priest of the diocese of Marseilles, October 28, 1855.**

I read very carefully the letter you recently sent me. Before replying, I prayed

God to enlighten me, since it is a very serious matter in my view. There is no doubt we must obey when God calls us to a more perfect life. None can contest this principle, we have to leave everything in this world to respond to such a great grace. Everything consists in discerning well this voice of God. This would be easy for a person who is called from the midst of the world, and we could answer like Saint Thomas Aquinas and after him, Saint Liguori: even if it were the demon who advises you, it would be a bad counsellor who gives you good advice. In your situation, however, it seems to me that some reflection is needed. You are a good priest, you belong to a diocese which does not have too many priests and you accomplish much good in the parish where you are stationed. I know that God is the Master of the field. He can invite a workman to some work which he considers more useful for his glory. He may want to choose this person precisely to reward him for his zeal in accomplishing well the task he had entrusted to him. In God's mind, this invitation to a more perfect life, more in conformity with what his divine Son had led on this earth, is a true promotion. No one

can deny this. I am also aware that God sometimes uses the difficulties one meets with in his ministry, the little response on the part of those in one's care, to make one aspire towards a more perfect state where greater success awaits us for doing God's work. However, you must also be careful that this departure is not too naturally motivated, nor the result of opposition, a kind of resentment against ingratitude and that, in this situation, one is not seeking more some way out of a weary situation where one meets only with discontent and disagreements, than the precious benefits of the religious life.

I am presenting these objections to you, my dear friend, certainly not to turn you away from a vocation which I appreciate, perhaps more than anyone else, but only to make you reflect further on your course of action because of its importance. Let us therefore pray a little more. You are not in danger in your present position since you have been placed there lawfully by the one who in your regard holds God's place. If by examining the matter some more before God and having well fathomed the purity of your intentions, God's voice makes itself

heard, I will not place any obstacle to what we will have recognized to be your vocation, and the doors of the novitiate will be open to you. Only the poor Bishop of Marseilles will suffer in the matter, for it will not be easy for him to find someone to succeed you. He will say like the holy Bishop of Montreal in similar circumstances: God is the Master, we must obey him. He knows my needs and he will provide.

(Copy. Reg. lettres 1855-1863, Post.)

425 — To Bishop Guigues, Provincial of Canada, January 20, 1857.

It is time that charity and mutual respect became normal among our Fathers. We would then not be in the distressing situation of not seeing a single subject coming to join us while they offer themselves every day to the Jesuits, who treat their Institute with more respect than our Fathers treat theirs. Should not a Catholic country like Canada provide enough resources to continue the service rendered by our men in their country? It is not the magnificence of the house that they have built for them-

selves at such expense that will draw men to us, but rather the religious virtues, good morale, unity, mutual esteem, and so forth. I also consider our Fathers responsible for the fact that people stay away from us. Time is needed, and a great reform of the bad habits that have gained ground before confidence will be restored. I urge you to preach to them about this. What is one single novice in a Congregation that for so many years has been active throughout Canada and in many dioceses of the United States?

(Copy. Reg. lettres 1855-1863, Post.)

JUNIORATE

426 — **To Father Guigues, in Canada, May 14-16, 1846.**

I am obliged to adopt for Canada, where the flow of vocations has so soon dried up, our system at Lumières. We have only this means left to supply our novitiate. It is a long road but one eventually reaches the end. Brother Faraud, who leaves soon for

Saint Boniface, was the first to enter this preparatory house. And now see him off to a royal career in the holy foreign missions. Others have followed him and each year some of them enter novitiate.

(Yenveux VIII, 120)

427 — **To Father Allard, in Canada, June 10, 1846.**

I think you should establish a juniorate in Canada as we have done at Lumières. This is our resource. It is the missions which provide us the occasion to become acquainted with these youngsters and direct them to Lumières. It is not much for the time being but one is compensated by their good conduct and by the promise of their future usefulness. You cannot fail to succeed if you undertake this (policy) in a country with faith such as yours.

(Yenveux VIII, 120)

428 — **To Father Dassy at N.D. de Bon Secours, August 14, 1847.**

I beg of you to inform Father Beaulieu that I have sent him to Notre-Dame de Bon

Secours precisely so that he could look after the needs of our Juniorate. It is not the school at l'Osier, it is a ministry that belongs to us and which must be fulfilled by our men. Tell him that I beg of him not to manifest greater dislike for this kind of work than for any other. It would be rather strange when so many of our brothers sacrifice themselves in the missions amidst the heathens, giving an example of heroic devotedness, if we were to come across men who are touchy and delicate, whose tastes we have to manage. Recommend that he be kind and firm in directing youth. This Father must try to become kind, simple, cordial to prove for once that he is not different from the others who are so successful in this area.

(Mss. Post.)

429 — **To Bishop Guigues, Provincial of Canada, June 23, 1857.**

Any idea that has as its end the encouragement of vocations will always have my full approval. So it is with pleasure that I see that you are occupying yourselves in

this way in Canada too, with a plan for a juniorate where you will educate a certain number of pupils some of whom you will later accept as novices for the Congregation, but it is useless for you to apply to the general fund for the expenses of this work. It is for each Province to provide for it by means of resources acquired for this purpose. This is how it is done in England where our Fathers have set up a juniorate where there are already eight or ten boys.

(Copy. Reg. lettres 1855-1863, Post. DM 10)

NOVITIATE

430 — **To Father Tempier, June 18, 1821.**

Have Father Viguier make a good novitiate, do not be satisfied with appearances, make him practise every kind of virtue, train him in the love of poverty, obedience and entire abnegation of himself, in the spirit of mortification, in humility. What I say regarding him, I equally recommend for all the others. I am annoyed that the whole time of the novitiate or at least an entire

year is not exclusively devoted to the study of perfection. It is a drawback that during this time we are obliged to tolerate profane studies and even theology. At least instruct your novices with more care than you have been able to use until now, because of being greatly occupied. Steep yourself in the lore of a good master of novices. If they do not acquire religious virtues while in novitiate, it is all up for the future.

(Yenveux VIII, 65)

431 — **To Father Tempier**, November 26, 1825.

Reflect on what I have told you in one of my letters about our novitiate. It is not set up to my liking. It is a great misfortune that this be so. We must absolutely reach the point of having as novices only those who truly wish to be such, who solicit this favour as a grace, on whose determination we can rely. What are these children who come without at all knowing what it is about, who have no taste for recollection, who are flighty in spirit, in a word, in a very poor frame of mind. All that I see since I have been in these parts has no resemblance at

all to our situation. What modesty, what submission, what piety! As I have passed through Turin, Genoa, Viterbo, what sins of envy have I not committed or at least, how much I have longed for the happiness of seeing a similar spirit take root amongst us. Therein lies the whole trouble. It is urgent that we see to this in future.

A novitiate which is truly a novitiate, where the subjects are fashioned with a master's hand, where care is taken to inculcate in them all that goes to form a true missionary, whence they will emerge full of virtue, inured to obedience and imbued with attachment and respect for the Rules and all they prescribe. I shall keep on saying it endlessly that we have only an imperfect mixture which gives us scarcely any hope and whereof the results cannot be favourable.

Father Courtès is too busy in any case; we must have a man who is wholly and entirely for this or who can give more of himself to it. We must give these young people all possible means of perfection and after a short trial, if they do not take to it, send them away without pity. What is the good of having subjects who eat away and who

in return for our care give us nothing but grief.

But, once more, we must look after them closely, almost exclusively, be continually with them, in a word, train them both by instruction and direction and even by conversation. The novices must truly be novices, let them be kept continually up to form either within the novitiate by study which is permitted in our Rules, by instructions, by practices of most excellent piety, that is to say, self-renunciation, humility, poverty, obedience, or outside by some work of zeal such as catechism for the poor, for the sick and for prisoners, visits to hospitals, etc. If we are not decisive in this matter, we will do nothing worthwhile. Reflect deeply on all that I have just said.

(Yenveux VIII, 58-59)

**432 — To Father Honorat, superior at Nimes,
May 4, 1828.**

Providence has supplied us in the person of Father Guibert, with a novice master who, it seems to me, is very much fit to fill this very important post. He wholeheartedly devoted himself to the task right

from the outset. His health, which has never been good, deteriorated and he needed a change of air and had to be completely relieved of this work. Nevertheless, it is the most important in the Society; without a novitiate, the Society is finished.

...Hence at this time, we must see to it that the spirit of our novitiate is well established. For that we need a novice master. You are this novice master, my dear Father Honorat, for you possess an inviolable attachment to the Society combined with love for order and regularity. My reflecting is all done. I would have wished to find someone else so I could leave you at Nîmes where you are doing well, but I have no one else in the Society, and no one will blame me for preferring this work over so many others, especially since it is a matter of forming persons who are to prevent the Society from dying out.

(Yenveux VII, 3; IX, 123)*

433 — **To Father Tempier, June 18, 1828.**

The most ardent desire for perfection, true joy in finding oneself in such a favourable situation for achieving it, devotedness

to the Church, zeal for the salvation of souls and a great attachment to the Society must be the characteristics of our novices. Love, esteem and fidelity to the Rules, poverty, obedience, respect for the superiors, etc., are other characteristics. Let us all cooperate in obtaining these results.

(Yenveux VIII, 69)

434 — **To Father Mille**, November 3, 1831.

I am annoyed that Bernard does not appreciate better the benefits of the novitiate's life and the exercises. Let him not be mistaken, therein lies the foundation of all the good he is called to accomplish. One must begin by denying oneself; the Lord must be allowed to build. Our mud is worthless as foundation material for the building. Self-denial, humility and then holy detachment from everything that the good Lord may want of us and which he communicates to us through the voice of the superiors, are the treasures hidden in the solitude of the novitiate. My God! hoping to do something without such values is to be ignorant indeed. The most ardent zeal will produce only

clouds of pride. Far from finding too long the little time available for preparing oneself we must acknowledge that it is not sufficient for shedding the remnants of the old man, and to ornate our interior with the many virtues we still lack and thus dispose ourselves to be an offering that is the least unworthy of God as possible. Preach therefore about humility, distrust of self, and instil a great desire for perfection, whatever sacrifices it may cost nature to attain it. This is a patient task and quite often it is accompanied by vexations imposed on you. No matter! Obedience eases what is most unbearable to human nature left to its own forces. Overcome evil by good, never lose courage; all those who have done this kind of ministry like you have experienced similar anguish. Ask God for his light. Reflect, do all that you can to succeed, then without worry or anxiety place yourself in the hands of divine Providence, which will not allow those who hope in it to be confounded.

(Yenveux VIII, 66-67)

435 — **To Father Courtès**, October 3, 1834.

The master of novices must be totally about his business. Hence he should never be taken away from his normal duties with the novices whom he should attend to as, so to say, the hen attends to its chicks. In case the superior needed the novice master for some other work, he must come to an understanding as to time with the novice master so that the novitiate, which is strictly speaking his only task, does not suffer. The same thing applies also in case the superior wants to give work to a novice. He must always arrange this with the novice master and give the latter full liberty to make any remarks he considers appropriate in virtue of his responsibility.

(Yenveux VII, 5)*

436 — **Diary**, February 13, 1837.

The novice master can never be too careful lest he be deceived by appearances. One may be mistaken for a few months, but if one watches carefully for a year those in one's charge and of whom one is to be the

guarantor in presenting them to the Superior General, who often does not know them at all, it is impossible that one is not perfectly able to assess the candidate's real worth. How many belated regrets could be avoided! I make this remark because it is evident that several members who have caused us many worries, could have been known well during the novitiate by their novice masters, as they were, in fact, known by their co-novices, who were not deceived by them.

(Mss. Post.)

**437 — To Father Vincens, master of novices
at N.D. de l'Osier, November 23, 1841.**

I recommend that you organize a good retreat in preparation for the novitiate, eight days of exercises according to Saint Ignatius. It is important that we admit only men, who are devoted, generous, detached so as to do everything that is required by obedience, especially detached from relatives whom they must love in God and for God, without the affection we continue to have for them ever influencing our course, activities, will, not even our thoughts.

Stress very much the importance of the obligation undertaken by oblation. They are free not to advance that far, but this consecration cannot be revoked. It is perpetual. It is not without reason that this social commitment is made in the presence of Jesus Christ, the divine Master, who approves it by his holy Body and his precious Blood...

Those who do not attach themselves wholeheartedly to the Congregation are not made for it. We must show them the Congregation as it is in the Church. It is the youngest of the religious families, but it enjoys the same dignity as all its older sisters, and it enjoys all their privileges and advantages. Thanks be to God again it is faithful to its vocation, and no one can question that it works more in the common Father's field than can be expected of it. It is up to you to elaborate on all these points and on others in the explanations that you are greatly obligated to give.

(Mss. Post.)

438 — **To Father Vincens, December 3, 1841.**

I don't need to recommend that you insist chiefly on piety. I cannot conceive vocation

without it. All our young men should be moulded according to this way. If fervour is lacking in a novitiate, we are not forming men of God. I see a great disadvantage in not having the Blessed Sacrament within easy access of the novices. It is to Jesus Christ that they should go to be filled with fervour. It is not enough to drink from this fountain during the time of the common exercises; each should be able to go often according to his inspiration and present himself before the Saviour and converse with him for a few moments in silent meditation. I am aware that in the present situation, there are serious difficulties, and even inconveniences, to go to the Blessed Sacrament where it is kept. Consider yourself deprived of a powerful means of making your novices fervent. Substitute for it at least by a quiet chapel of the Blessed Virgin, where a person can go to recollect himself. Have no fear in setting aside a room for this purpose. Instil into them the spirit of mortification also. You should be in a situation where often you have to refuse or modify what they ask for in this area. But especially let all of them live in a great spirit

of detachment in regard to what obedience asks of them.

(Yenveux VIII, 79-80)

439 — **To Father Honorat, at Longueuil, May 31, 1843.**

The novitiate preoccupies me excessively. Evidently you have not been able to look after it. You have not ceased to go out on missions or absent yourself on business. This will not do for a house of this kind. You need an assiduous master who settles down and is solely and constantly occupied with his novices. Without that, you are not forming your personnel. You have men but they remain as they were when they entered. This is an irremediable evil and its consequences will be deadly both for these persons and for the Congregation.

(Mss. Post.)

440 — **To Father Santoni, at N.D. de l'Osier, March 18, 1845.**

We cannot test our candidates too much lest we risk the unpleasantness of discovering when it is too late that we have been

mistaken in their regard. All the same we must not tempt God by asking too much from human weakness. What I want to say is that not all are fit to be put through extraordinary tests. However all must pass those tests designed to ground them in the virtues which they must practise, namely, obedience, poverty, self-denial, holy indifference towards everything that could be required of them in terms of work, place, persons, etc..

(Yenveux VII, 18)

**441 — To Father Dassy, superior at Nancy,
June 23, 1848.**

This Father had volunteered to be novice master.

Perhaps you will tell me that if I gave you a good socius, you could accept this task. I accept your piety, regularity and your zeal, but I fear your severity, your demands. Though apparently kind, you lack suppleness of character, you hold too much to your opinion, you do not know how to give in to certain little things which we must often overlook in order more easily to obtain

greater results. I am afraid that your regime in the daily rapport with the novices will be difficult to bear. You will perhaps not be sufficiently on your guard against certain prejudices. In a word, you would have to do much and perhaps too much to gain the confidence of the young people; and yet, this is a necessity in a novice master's work. The latter should be looked upon as a holy person in his novitiate, but also as a good father.

(Yenveux VII, 16)*

442 — **To Father Dorey, at Nancy, October 15, 1848.**

There you are, installed in your lovely task! What more beautiful ministry than that of forming in virtue, especially in the religious virtues, the chosen souls called by God to walk in the footsteps of the Apostles to spread the knowledge and the love of Jesus Christ! How much a person profits for oneself in leading others to perfection! This has turned out to be your lot. Rejoice over it, my son, and count on God's help in this valuable ministry...

Even though you are as young as you are, you must, nevertheless, be a father to your novices, you must be close to them in their difficulties and encourage them, but not spoil them. They have to acquire habits of mortification, get used to leading a somewhat hard life, and not seek comforts because we are called to a ministry which does not include any. Insist much on mutual love, on helping one's neighbour, and especially one's brethren. Let them understand very well the truth of the words: *inimici hominis domestici eius* (Mt. 10:36). Excessive love for relatives has ruined many a vocation and destroyed many budding virtues. It goes without saying that they must be imbued by the duties of obedience, so as to bring about this happiness, this peace of soul in all circumstances, which is the lot of a religious who has this virtue; it must reach the point of perfect detachment, willingly accepting through compliance of spirit, everything, that is, what God prescribes through the voice of the superiors, and not even desiring anything other than what is asked of us. You must inspire a great love for our divine Saviour Jesus Christ, which is mani-

festes especially in the Sacrament of the Eucharist which we must try to adore perfectly; also a filial devotion to the most holy Mother of God, who is our Mother also in a special manner; a devotedness to the Church that can stand any test, which includes the zeal that must distinguish all the members of our Society, for the salvation of souls, the direct object of our vocation. Since we must discover all these advantages in the blessed Congregation that has given birth to us, you can understand the kind of love each one of us must have for it. On this topic, I cannot help quoting to you from a letter I have just received from our dear Father Vincens: « I can fathom all the recesses of my heart, I find only one love there which for me is what religion is all about, namely, the love for our Congregation. I have only one desire, that of bringing glory to God and for me all the means of glorifying him are summed up in the Congregation. Hence it is her that I love, etc. ». How touching these sentiments are! And they are true. Yes, for us all the means of glorifying God are summed up in the Congregation. Such an opinion of a man of God must be meditated upon by all those whom the Lord has

called, through an inestimable grace, to sanctify themselves in the Congregation.

(*Mss. Post.*)

443 — **To Father G. Richard, appointed novice master at N.D. de l'Osier, July 21, 1851.**

Now I would have liked to tell you somewhat more at length to what extent you must place your trust in God. It is he, who arranges all things, who has given you this responsibility which weighs on you, *alius sic alius vero sic*. When your predecessor took charge he was not older than you and he did not even have the experience of your travels. You know that he managed well. In a large community of a great religious Order I have seen a novice master who was not older than you are. The good Lord uses all kinds of instruments to achieve his purposes. So it behoves us, men of obedience, always to set aside our humility and say in all simplicity *in nomine tuo laxabo rete*. On the strength of these principles, it is not even right to belittle ourselves too much in the eyes of those whom we have been asked

to guide. A good balanced attitude is needed, were it only for the honour of the position and the dignity of the authority that has been vested in you.

(Mss. Post.)

444 — To Father Richard, October 21, 1852.

My dear son, you will never have too high an idea of the duties of a religious chosen to train those whom the good Lord has called to holiness and to the practice of all the religious virtues. The future of the Congregation depends on a good novice master.

(Mss. Post.)

445 — To Father Verdet, superior at Brownsville, August 24, 1854.

I greatly desire that you should see the number of your aspirants increasing; I recommend you to give them a good initiation into the principles and practice of religious life; self-denial, indifference in all things, abnegation, obedience, interior life, regularity, love of one's vocation, etc.

(Yenveux VII, 18)*

446 — **To Father Vandenberghe, novice master at N.D. de l'Osier, September 22, 1854.**

My dear Father, concern yourself very much with your novitiate. That is your big responsibility. Let everything else be quite secondary. Busy yourself with other things only if you are certain that your main duty does not suffer. It is so important that you form good religious; even with the grace of God on which you must depend above all, you will achieve this only through diligent and unceasing efforts. It is not enough to give a general formation through common conferences, but you must work on each individual as if he were the only one you had to form... I insist on a manly training; all of them should be able to say that they could be called to difficult work. No softness, for that does not go along with the spirit of mortification. Let them think of what our missionaries in Oregon and at Red River are undergoing joyously. Let them get used early to a life of privations.

(Mss. Post.)

447 — **To Father Boisramé, novice master at Sicklinghall, September 30, 1858.**

Father Boisramé is too severe. He must take the weakness of young people into consideration and know how to encourage them by understanding and gentleness.

My dear Father, I hasten to say that I find you somewhat severe towards your novices. No doubt it is necessary, especially in England, to instil in them the spirit of mortification but one must not, however, go too far in putting them to the test. You will risk discouraging them and losing their confidence if, by your repeated acts, they can and actually become persuaded that you exaggerate. Truly it was too much to object to those who were parched with thirst that they slake it with a little water!... Mortifications of this kind are not to be demanded. Such requests ought to come from the member himself when the good God inspires him and even then it is not always appropriate to permit them...

If by the exigencies in question you upset our novices, you will have to consider yourself much to blame. I tell you once

more, the spirit of mortification should not be demanded but inspired, each one being allowed to follow his own initiative without any pressure. These are exaggerations which have given rise to the murmuring of which you complain. The murmuring is blameworthy, it is true, but you could have avoided it by being less demanding.

So change your ways, my dear friend, and you will arrive at your goal by condescension, mildness, thoughtfulness, marks of interest and affection. You know the proverb: more flies can be caught with honey than with vinegar. The novices must be persuaded that they have in you a father who truly loves them, who is concerned for their health and well being, who even knows how to diminish the severity of the Rule in view of their needs. Once this persuasion is established, you will obtain everything from them without seeming to try.

Permit yourself only rarely and for grave reasons to make public remonstrances. They are more apt to exasperate than to correct. Keep your reprimands, if it is suitable to make them, for a private interview and even then, make them with much mildness and care. Do not begin by scolding. On the con-

trary, begin always by assuring the person of the interest you take in his good and the sorrow you experience in being obliged to bring him to realize that he has conducted himself badly in such or such a circumstance. The human heart is made this way. God himself does not enter it by force but knocks at the door: *Praebe, fili mi, cor tuum mihi* (Prov. 28:26).

These, my dear son, are my replies to the questions you put to me. Do not be afraid to accept them and conform your conduct thereto...

As for the other brother who is continually depressed, etc., you must restore his courage by making friendly overtures to him. Persuade yourself that your combat is more with the demon who tempts all these young people in all sorts of ways than with the little difficulties that each of them have. Know how to perceive their imperfections as instigated by the evil spirit who wants to turn them away from their vocation and do not fall into the trap. All is won by hell if they become discouraged. So concede something to their weakness and do not wish to make perfect men of them before the time...

P.S. Do not allow mortifications at table.

Young people need to eat and the fare is not excessive:

(Mss. Post.)

SPIRIT OF THE CONGREGATION

448 — **To Father Tempier, August 22, 1817.**

This spirit of being wholly devoted to the glory of God, the service of the Church and the salvation of souls, is the spirit that is proper to our Congregation, a small one, to be sure, but which will always be powerful as long as she is holy... Each Society in the Church has a spirit which is its own; which is inspired by God according to the circumstances and needs of the times wherein it pleases God to raise these supporting bodies or rather it would be better to say these elite bodies which precede the main army on the march, which excel it in bravery and which thus obtain the more brilliant victories.

(Rambert I, 237)

449 — **To Father Courtès, at Aix, February 2, 1826.**

(The novices) do not yet possess the spirit of the Society. They need to be formed in obedience, self-denial, love of poverty and many other virtues unknown in the Seminaries where they had lived hitherto. The Society's hopes depend on how usefully the novitiate period is spent. I cannot think otherwise. I would not hesitate to give up everything for this primary need of the Congregation.

(Yenveux VIII, 71)

450 — **To Father Guibert, superior at N.D. du Laus, July 29, 1830.**

My dear friend, I am still hurt by what I have seen at N.D. du Laus. May it please God that my exhortations have produced the results I have the right to expect. I hope that each one has taken note that he is very strongly obliged to strictly observe the Rules. Where would we be if people were faithful to the Rules only in communities I can supervise myself? Even then, we would not yet

have achieved the end we seek. We must be filled with our spirit and live by it. This is so evident that it needs no explanation. Just as in a Society there is a common dress, common Rules, there must also be a common spirit that gives life to this particular body. The spirit of the Bernadine is not that of the Jesuit. Our spirit is also something particular to us. Those who have not grasped it, because they did not make a good novitiate are like dislocated members among us. They make the body suffer and they themselves are not at ease. It is indispensable that they find their right place.

(Yenveux V, 205)

451 — **To Father Tempier, August 14, 1844.**

At l'Osier you will have to recommend that more seriousness is instilled into the novices. All of them are young, and consequently they tend to be dissipated and childish. I insist that these defects be corrected and I request you to be very careful to pay attention to what I recommend... Another thing which you will have to correct is that we must not be satisfied with forming just

good ecclesiastics, or good religious for that matter, but we must do all we can to make them members of our Congregation who imbibe its spirit and who cling to it.

If my information is correct, we are not doing anything to obtain this result; you must insist on it again and again in order to form this kind of second nature which is meant to produce such good results.

(Yenveux VIII, 70)

OBLATION

452 — **To Father C. Baret**, August 18, 1843.

My dear son, you were only a novice when you wrote to me on August 5, but today you are a son of the Congregation which rightly boasts of possessing the most holy Virgin Mary as its Mother. Here you are consecrated to God for life and beyond by your oblation, and I must add in all humility, but with great consolation, that I have thereby also become your father. I do not know you personally, but since the love uniting me to my children is essentially one

of the supernatural order, it is enough for me to know that our Lord Jesus Christ, our common Master, has accepted your vows, that he has adopted and marked you with the seal that makes us what we are. As a result we are united in the most intimate bonds of charity and I belong to you always as you belong to me.

These thoughts will surely have occurred to you during the retreat that preceded your oblation, and how much they must have filled your heart with joy. Nevertheless I fear that the joys you communicated to me in your letter may have been too great a diversion. My dear son, get used early to placing an unbounded confidence in God. You must be totally generous towards such a good Father, who is so great and powerful simultaneously. You must dedicate yourself to him unreservedly. He is aware of your needs, he knows the legitimate desires of your heart. That is sufficient. He rightly wants us to consider ourselves so honoured, that we be so happy to be admitted into the intimacy of his privileged disciples, that in return and in gratitude, we dedicate ourselves to him unreservedly and unconditionally. Your elder brothers with whom I am

in contact here these last few days, prove to me, by their conversation and behaviour, that they have understood these principles very well and they edify and console me. It will be the same for you. You have consecrated yourself to God, his Church and to the Congregation. Rely on him for everything else. He will know how to inspire what is right to whomever it may concern.

(Mss. Post.)

453 — To Brothers Bonnard, Martini, Cooke and Dunne, August 22, 1846.

My dear sons, I combine in one and the same letter, the reply that each one of you has the right to expect from me. The sentiments I have to express to you are the same: gratitude to God for the benefits he has granted you, congratulations on the occasion of your religious profession by which you have consecrated yourselves to the Lord and have committed yourselves to the service of the Church in the Congregation whose principal end is the conversion of souls, especially of the most abandoned souls. I must also tell you my personal satisfaction in accepting as my sons men who are so well

disposed, as you are, full of good will to respond to the grace of your sublime vocation.

You have shown yourselves good, pious and edifying during the novitiate. That is what has made you fit to be admitted for profession. But, remember, my dear sons, that far from relaxing your efforts now that you are out of the novitiate, you are bound to strive towards a greater perfection. All that you have done hitherto is, so to say, only a preparation for the holy state you have embraced and which you possess now. The novitiate was a period of trial to see if you are fit to fulfil the duties inherent in religious profession. Now the full weight of these duties rests on you, if it is at all proper to call the sweet and light yoke of the Lord a burden. It is nonetheless true that you are bound by your duty of state to walk in the way of the highest perfection, that failures in regularity, any negligence or infidelity in the observance of your Rules, which during the novitiate could have been excusable up to a certain point, would now take on a much more serious note in proportion to the sublime state of holiness to which you have been called by your religious

profession, which profession situates you in a higher order and closer relationship to God and his Son our Lord Jesus Christ than the ordinary Christian or even ecclesiastics.

All these things you must ponder and meditate during the entire period you will be in formation, so that when you are ordained priests and have acquired the necessary knowledge and are called to fulfil the tasks of the ministry proper to the sons of Mary Immaculate, you will be fit for the kind of service to which you will be assigned to produce in people the results they expect from you, to be a credit to your ministry, and a source of consolation to the Church and to the Congregation, your Mother, who has done so much to form you and who has every right to count on your cooperation.

(Mss. Post.)

SCHOLASTICATE

454 — **To Father Tempier**, November 4, 1817.

As the number of young people who belong to the house has increased, exactness and regularity must grow in proportion.

This is the time to form the spirit of the house which I have discussed with you in another letter. You have to beware of frivolity, of self-sufficiency, indiscipline, independence... I quite insist that all give a good example at the seminary... They ought not to forget that we are a Congregation of regular clerics, that we ought in consequence to be more fervent than simple seminarists, that we are called to replace in the Church the piety and all the virtues of the religious Orders, that all their actions ought to be done with the dispositions in which the apostles were when they were in the Cenacle waiting for the Holy Spirit to come and enflame them with his love and give them the signal to go forth swiftly and conquer the world, etc..

(Rey I, 222-223)

455 — To Father Sumien and to the scholastics of Aix, March 18, 1823.

As you know, you are the hope of our Society; so you can gauge my happiness when I contemplate you going forward in the ways of the Lord, full of ardour for

good, burning with holy zeal for the salvation of souls, devoted to the Church, scorning and trampling on all that detracts from perfection and compromises salvation. Then it is that I exult with joy and congratulate myself at having you as children. Oh! I have no doubt that you will follow the footsteps of your elder brothers — see the prodigies that it has already pleased the Lord to work through their ministry! This is because, young though they be, they are filled with the spirit which vivifies everything. That is why we try to perpetuate it amongst us and it is through you, my dear friends, that this living and fruitful tradition will be transmitted to that other class of our Society, the novices, who follow along immediately after you. Continue to give them the example of all the virtues, of regularity, of fidelity to the Rules; live always in this intimate union which makes of our house a true paradise on earth.

(Yenveux VIII, 191)

456 — **To Father Mille, at Billens, May 27, 1831.**

Father Pons, professor at the Scholasticate of Billens, was planning to write a book of apologetics.

It is not that I disapprove the sentiments that have prompted our Pons; in fact I approve them very much. My only fear is that the community may suffer from this, and I can never repeat too much that everything has to be sacrificed in favour of this primary duty. Above all he must provide his brothers with all the means in his power to help them to make progress. In my opinion, the least negligence in this matter would be an unpardonable fault. Once this essential point is safeguarded, I may willingly consent to his attempting to refute and confound the Church's enemies. It would endear our family still more to the Catholics of our country. However, I leave you to judge the opportuneness of this matter; but I come back to my fear, namely, that the service of the community may suffer because of it.

(Yenveux II, 38)

457 — **To Father Guigues, at N.D. de l'Osier,**
August 18, 1843.

Please tell Father Vincens for his consolation, that I am very pleased with his young men. I am not referring to Brother Nicholas who does not have to make any great sacrifices, but the other three have aroused my admiration and sympathy. A more generous disposition, a more perfect devotedness, a more supernatural outlook cannot be found. They are making a sacrifice of the most natural and most legitimate affections with a real joy springing from fidelity and love for their holy vocation; they are convinced they will never see their own country again and they would blame themselves were they to regret it. Brother Garin shares their way of thinking even though he is not destined to go so far. God wants us to go ahead, they told me, we should not bother about anything else. Really, I have difficulty hiding my emotions and controlling the manifestation of my admiration. These are the disciples who bring honour to their Master. May Father Vincens rejoice because of them and if he meets with any difficulty, let him think of them. Our Lord,

our divine exemplar, had to be very patient with his beloved Apostles who were often unbearable and troublesome.

(Mss. Post.)

458 — **To Father Bellon, moderator of scholastics, August 30, 1844.**

I cannot tolerate this habit of imperfection in young religious who should be models of piety.

Notify them in my name that I will not admit to Holy Orders those who do not give me the guarantee of solid piety and regularity above every test. I do not understand that people can bargain with the good Lord. I will not go into detail, but I remind you, who are their director, that it is not a question of being satisfied with anything you can achieve, but that they are to put themselves heart and soul into acquiring the virtues that are proper to the state of perfection they have vowed.

Keep telling them in my name, that they are neither school-children nor ordinary Christians, nor even seminarians, but religious who, in conscience, are bound to walk in the way of perfection; and your duty is

to be firm in requiring that they fulfil their obligations. You may read my letter to them. I will be glad if they know what I think and how dissatisfied I am with the little progress they have made in their spiritual life and with their many imperfections in which they stagnate. I was going to ask you to instil into them self-denial, renouncement to their own will, obedience as it is understood by our Rules and observed in all good Congregations and Orders, zeal for their own perfection so as to deserve to work for the sanctification of others. But I see that in everything we have to start again from the beginning with the very first principles of spiritual life. I implore you to demand also that they be polite, honest and kind. Do not permit any rudeness. Let them get used to bearing up with one another. Deal severely with any kind of murmur, and let charity reign among us to such an extent that it isn't even possible for anyone to fail in it in the slightest manner. In a word, let our training be manly, serious and totally saintly. It is a question of forming men who are to be imbued with the spirit of Jesus Christ capable of fighting the terrific power of the devil, of destroying his reign among

people, of building up the world so as to bring it to the truth and of serving the Church in the most lofty and difficult apostolate. Is it possible to achieve these results with them who are not generous, who have no courage, are devoid of love and have fallen into a rut? When does a person entertain such sentiments if he does not have them during the period of fervour?

(Yenveux VIII, 197)

459 — **To Father Mouchette, new moderator of scholastics, at N.D. de Lumières, July 9, 1853.**

Certainly you have to use proper moderation in your relationship with the Brothers entrusted to you. Much gentleness in manner but great strictness in regularity and the observance of the Rules which should become like a sound habit to make of them, as it were, a sort of second nature which they will maintain throughout their lives. Thus, never any voluntary infringement of the Rule. We must not fall behind all those religious bodies that are re-establishing themselves in France in the fervour of their original spirit.

You must be moderate as regards bodily mortifications lest their health be compromised, but this does not mean you must be afraid of making use of them with moderation. The spirit of mortification and lukewarmness never go together. On the contrary, keeping away from mortifications is almost a sure sign of lukewarmness.

You should insist on holy indifference towards everything required by obedience. This is the pivot of religious obedience. Detachment from relatives is such a meritorious virtue that one must possess it at any cost if one wants to become fit for something. This is all the more true of detachment from one's country. The whole earth belongs to the Lord and we are called to serve him indiscriminately as the need arises and in accordance with the choice and will of the superiors...

Take care of everyone's health, but without any affected tenderness, nor any preoccupation on the part of the subjects. In short, give them an education that is manly and religious but fatherly. This is the method I adopted in the beginning when I myself was in charge of training our members.

(Mss. Post.)

460 — **To Father Martinet, at N.D. de Lumières, August 9, 1854.**

Father Martinet had been asked to replace temporarily Father Mouchette, the moderator of scholastics.

I insist very much that we care for the health of our Oblates, but I also insist that the spirit of mortification does not disappear from our midst. You must be careful not to turn them into soft and sensual men those whom God may be calling to all the privations of the apostolic life. What I wish to say is that at the novitiate this rule of conduct may have been forgotten. These ideas should be corrected during the rest of the formation. To the same extent that superiors must watch over the health of their men, the men too, should be little concerned about it, unless they are sick. What I say is not applicable to the precautions which the present situation (cholera) demands. On the contrary. As soon as a person feels indisposed, he should say so. At another period it would be ridiculous to pay attention to it, but today it is a duty which should be carried out without anxiety or other worries of mind.

(Mss. Post.)

461 — **To Father Mouchette, moderator of scholastics, March 11, 1860.**

The satisfying news you send me about your community of Montolivet is a great consolation. My eyes, and still more my heart, are for ever turned towards those dear sons, who are the hope of our family. I am happy that they understand the sublimity of their vocation and are courageously endeavouring to become holy religious. I am confident they will bring honour to their great ministry and will make themselves all worthy to be chosen, some to fight the battle of the Lord amidst the degenerate Christians of Europe, and others to walk in the footsteps of the Apostles to proclaim the good news to the heathen nations in various parts of the globe.

Oh yes, all of them will leave their wonderful community of Montolivet, fully equipped like true athletes, impervious to bad example, a sort of seduction against which they will know how to defend themselves. Their mere presence and the regularity of their life will arouse up fervour wherever they will be summoned by obedience. I rejoice, in advance, over the blessings the

Lord will bestow on them as a reward for their fidelity. God will be glorified through them, and our beloved Congregation honoured in the Church because of them.

(Mss. Post.)

462 — **To Bishop E. Semeria, at Jaffna, July 8, 1860.**

I am very cross that you have stopped the studies of the Brother who had begun to learn Latin. I would like nothing to hold up his admission to Orders which is already decided upon. Were it not for the fear that the change of climate would be too dangerous for him, I would have no compunction in telling you to send him to us, even if only to encourage vocations. But, having reflected on the problem, I have decided that it would be more profitable and easier for him to study with you, but study requires continuity and any lacuna is very harmful. It is therefore essential that you organise things in such a way that he can continue his studies, at least in part, while doing other things if for the moment you absolutely cannot do without him.

(Mss. Post.)

STUDIES

463 — **To Father Mille, superior at Billens (Switzerland), January 3, 1831.**

I can never recommend too much that study must never be neglected. I do not mean only theology and philosophy but also the humanities. We must fight the errors of the world with the arms of our time. I am always surprised to see so many young people on the side of the enemy who write so well with so much skill and talent, to uphold falsehood and deceptions of all sorts. We must train ourselves even for this kind of combat. Let each one know his mother-tongue well and practise using it well. That is time well spent. Draw forth fire from the rock: for this you have to strike, for a spark is produced only by concussion. However, never forget that it is the Church that requests this service from you. This means that you must supernaturalize your studies, sanctify them by a great purity of intention, leaving all self-love aside and not seeking yourself at all. In this way even secular authors bring you as close to God as do the Fathers of the Church.

(Rey I, 506)

464 — **To Father Mille**, April 15, 1831.

I understand that the parish of Billens keeps you very busy, but what a lot of good you do there! The only thing I ask is that studies do not suffer thereby. We live in a world where we must be fully prepared to fight evil doctrines by means other than good example alone. I would like to see that at least a few prepare themselves for polemics for which the enemies of religion show so much ease and such talent. Insist that they learn to speak and write well. Make up some exercise that helps them acquire a facility in this. Encourage the aptitudes of each. Devote yourself to Latin. It would give me pleasure to see our dear Pons training students who succeed as well as he. I recommend that he encourage those whom he considers talented for this. I am waiting impatiently for the details you said you would give regarding studies. I don't say more except that I will come back to this after I have heard from you.

(Yenveux VIII, 174)

465 — **To Father Mille, June 6, 1831.**

The Founder gives some advice regarding two Brothers whom he sends to Billens and who had been weak in their studies hitherto.

My intention is that you devote all your attention to these young men. It is a question of forming them, imparting our spirit to them, instilling into them the love for our family without which they would be good for nothing worthwhile. They are new to all this. You ought to give yourself to this matter before everything else, and do not rely on anyone else in this charge...

In a word, it is essential that our men, whoever they may be, do everything to improve their studies and becomes fit to serve the Church that is being attacked in her teachings by men who are quite capable. I would not be put out if the training were prolonged. The important thing is that nothing remains buried, that everyone makes the best use of the amount of talents the Lord has allotted to him; in a word, that they become capable of defending the truth and the sacred deposit of the faith, not only by prayer but by word and writing, if necessary...

Today the duty of every soldier of Jesus Christ is to prepare himself for everything according to the capacity and talents the Lord has deigned to bestow on each.

(Yenveux VIII, 151)

466 — **To Father Tempier**, October 4, 1835.

It is necessary that Father Pons conduct a class of humanities for the scholastics. Here Father Mille, who certainly had enough to do, gave these classes and it did not prevent him from giving the class of theology to the entire community. This is what should be done everywhere: to be always ready to do with good grace whatever is for the good of the Church and the benefit of the Congregation. We should not ask ourselves whether this would involve difficulties or a change. We will never experience these if we acquire the good habit of always doing everything for God without any self-seeking. I think that is so evident it is superfluous to insist on it.

(Yenveux V, 46)

467 — **To Father Honorat, in Canada, March 1, 1844.**

In the name of God, let us not be encumbered with mediocre types. It is useless to lull oneself into thinking that their minds can be formed later. If their studies are not finished at the appropriate time, they remain ignorant. And yet in the missions, more than anywhere else, learning is necessary because of the lack of books and of the possibility to consult.

Let theology therefore be properly taught and let there be no neglect of training in literary composition for a missionary must not persuade himself he has the privilege of preaching against the dictates of good sense, without style, without method and without doctrine, etc.

(Yenveux IV, 230)

468 — **To Father E. Semeria, at Jaffna, May 9, 1848.**

On this very day four of our Brothers and a Lay-Brother are to embark for Canada. They have among them only one priest, a deacon on whom I conferred the diaconate

the second day after I had made him sub-deacon, and two in minor orders. These last two have not yet begun their theology — Fr. Allard will have the responsibility of teaching it to them at Longueuil; the deacon has only done one year's theology. You will say that we are eating our wheat while it is still green, but it is not true: they will do their studies as well at Longueuil as here, and they will acclimatise themselves to the country as they learn the languages. Also, it was necessary to take advantage of the opportunity of a ship that was leaving Marseilles to go directly to Boston and offered us the advantages of saving five or six francs a head.

(Mss. Post.)

469 — **To Father E. Semeria, at Jaffna, November 22, 1848.**

For the thousandth time I will say to you: find us money for the travel-expenses of our Fathers, and at once I will send you some, though not as many as you would like because I regard it as important that they should have finished their studies in theology in order to be more useful to the

mission and never to compromise themselves; if we were to hurry them too much, we would run the risk that they would never learn what they must know.

(Mss. Post.)

470 — **To Father Pierre Aubert, in Canada,**
March 4, 1849.

We have excellent young men here who only long to go to the native missions. But we are determined to have them finish their theological studies before sending them. Under the pretext that it is not necessary for them to know many things to evangelize the Savages, they are sometimes sent too soon into their territories. This is not my idea and however impatient our young people may be, I shall keep them until the end of their studies.

(Yenveux VIII, 175)

471 — **To Bishop Guigues, in Canada,** March
25, 1849.

I cannot in conscience approve the policy you follow in Canada of conferring Orders in advance on children void of knowl-

edge and who will suffer all their lives from this deficiency in education. So I have decided to send no more members other than those who have finished their studies and who have spent sufficient time within our houses to form themselves in the practice of religious virtues. I prefer a thousand times to make you wait rather than have you reproach me with not having provided for the needs of our members and with having risked compromising their salvation and that of the souls they know not how to guide, as well as the reputation of the Congregation. When I consented to send you, at your request, raw Oblate recruits, it was because I was firmly persuaded that you would train them both in ecclesiastical science as well as in piety.

(Yenveux VIII, 175)

ON-GOING FORMATION

472 — **Act of Visitation of the house of N.D. du Laus, June 22, 1828.**

We have said that by strictly observing these Rules (of silence and recollection), it

is possible to study better. This remark is made because we have observed that no one studies at all. From this duty nothing can ever dispense priests and religious, who are to be not only the salt of the earth, but also the light of the world!

What we mean by not studying is when we only read one book or another now and then out of mere curiosity and without any lasting profit. To study well, a person must have a plan, do some reading that is related to this plan, make notes on what one reads, add his own personal reflections to them, consult various works that confirm, corroborate or clarify the subject matter with which he is concerned. A person really studies when he becomes more and more well versed in theology, when he deepens his knowledge of the Scriptures, when he composes sermons, when he prepares instructions for the missions and retreats. It would be a terrible mistake to think that one is dispensed from writing out one's sermons because one has already preached several missions. The Rules are explicit on this point...

Is this what is being done in practice? In reply to these questions we hardly dare to

admit that on our arrival we found only one writing-desk with ink in the entire house. This is a great disorder which neither works of zeal nor the diligence to fulfil the duties of the holy ministry which, as we know, is undertaken with a praiseworthy eagerness, can excuse. We recommend that the local superior be firm in that there is more study from now on, and we exhort him to have the theology conference at least once a week, as the Rules prescribe. In that way, the most important treatises will be reviewed one by one.

(Copy. Post.)

**473 — General Chapter, session of August 7,
1837.**

A proposal was read regarding a plan of studies for the first ten years following ordination to Priesthood. The author of this proposal stressed that his project, besides removing the danger of abandoning young priests to their inexperience in the way they use the most valuable years of their life, also had great advantages in view of forming eminent men by taking a special in-

terest in young priests right from the time of their priestly ordination.

This plan of studies, which would include the highest ecclesiastical sciences, would be drawn up by a commission which will submit its conclusions to the scrutiny of the most Reverend Superior General before putting them into effect. All the Chapter members welcomed, with a lively and animated vote, this project which one of them had elaborated to the satisfaction of all.

(Mss. Gen. Arch. O.M.I.)

474 — **To Father Vincens, May 5, 1846.**

Then I must inform you that my Council has decided that our young priests will come together at N.D. de (Lumières) to prepare themselves through study for the holy ministry which is daily jeopardized by the incompetence of those who exercise it without experience, with little knowledge and without books. Those I shall summon will be quite a number. To add greater value and give a good orientation to this important project, I have chosen you, for a few months

at least, for the post of moderator of these studies.

(Mss. Post.)

475 — To Father Dassy, chosen for the establishment of N.D. de Bon Secours, May 14, 1846.

Do not commit yourself beyond your means. The very necessary step I took for this year leaves me without the possibility of assigning our young men. They are going to prepare themselves for the holy ministry. They will devote the whole year to studies. So do not count on any great assistance for quite some time. Regarding confessors for the busy period, you will arrange for them as you have done in the past. Once again be patient and don't be anxious to proceed faster than the sailing ship, blown by the wind of Providence, allows. In any case, I have said too much by speaking about a whole year being set aside for study by our young priests. These studies will not extend beyond the end of October, since the professor is employed elsewhere from the beginning of November.

(Mss. Post.)

476 — **To Father Guigues, in Canada, July 30, 1846.**

I have at last been able to realize a project which I have much to heart and which should have happy consequences for the Congregation. It is to send all our young Fathers back to study. To this end I have not recoiled from almost emptying all our houses. I have brought them all together at Parménie under the immediate direction of Father Vincens who is appointed to direct their studies and make them work. They have been at it since the beginning of the month. If vocations are rare, let us at least train presentable men.

(Yenveux VIII, 216)

477 — **General Chapter, session of August 28, 1850, evening.**

Another proposal, no less important, was made in the following terms:

Art. 1. The General Chapter decrees that from now on, no new priest of the Congregation may be engaged in the holy ministry before spending two years in the house of

preparatory studies specific to the ends of the Institute. Those who are immediately to be sent to the foreign missions are exempted from this regulation.

Art. 2. The Fathers belonging to the aforementioned house, on condition that they are given in this locality the assistance appropriate to the ministry they will have to fulfil, may be assigned to some missions even during the two years of studies determined by art. 1; this work is then to be seen as a means of helping them to attain the goal they have in view.

Art. 3. Those who had been ordained prior to entering the Congregation, will, after the novitiate, also have to follow for at least one year, the courses given in the house of studies.

Many solid reasons were presented to induce the Chapter to adopt the proposed measure. Even though it is quite certain that during the first years to come this regulation will cause embarrassment both to the Society's administration and to the houses already established and whose members are still limited, nevertheless the Chap-

ter members, convinced of the need to make some sacrifices at the present moment, in order to assure the future by training good men for a truly apostolic preaching, for the teaching of theology if necessary, and for the more immediate need of moral theology in administering the Sacrament of Penance, did not flinch from these sacrifices because of the real and very considerable benefits that will ensue in a more distant future. These same reasons apply to a certain point, also in the case of priests who join the novitiate to become members of the Congregation. Every latitude is however left to the directors of the house of studies to have these priests follow the courses in the manner that will be most useful to them and more adapted to their own vocation.

When one Chapter member suggested that this house of studies be situated in Paris so that those who belong to it may be in a better position to follow the eminent courses given in the capital city, Bishop Guigues rightly observed that it is not so much science and eminent courses that our men need but a knowledge that is solid and suitable for the apostolic ministry so that the spirit of our Institute is never impaired.

The latter could be feared if our men were to be taught by those who are complete strangers to our Congregation. This proposal, skillfully presented by its author and seriously discussed by the Chapter members was subsequently adopted by a significantly unanimous vote.

(Mss. Gen. Arch. O.M.I.)

478 — To Father Tempier, Visitor Extraordinary to Canada, August 28, 1851.

It is not just today that we have had to lament the excessive ease of assigning our men before they are sufficiently formed. You must not fear to use strong means to remedy this evil in Canada. They can imitate what is being done here. I have withdrawn from their activities, already abundantly blessed, several of our missionaries who may have been upset by this procedure. But we considered it useful to take a stand in order to perfect them in theological studies, Holy Scripture and composition. I see a still greater advantage in what is being done here under the direction of Father Vincens, namely, the forming of good reli-

gious. What we are doing is equivalent to what is known as the third year of the Jesuits.

(Yenveux VIII, 217)

VIII. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CONGREGATION

479 — Preface to the Constitutions and Rules.

But it is not enough for them simply to be convinced of the sublime nature of the ministry to which they have been called. The example of the saints and reason itself make it amply clear that the success of such a holy undertaking as well as the maintenance of discipline in any society make certain rules of life absolutely necessary for unity of thought and action among the members. Such unity is a body's strength, keeping up its fervour and insuring that it lasts.

Wherefore, while pledging themselves to all the works of zeal which priestly charity can inspire — above all, to the work of the missions, which is the main reason for their union — these priests, joined together in a society, resolve to obey the following Consti-

tutions and Rules; by living them they hope to obtain all the benefits they need for their own sanctification and for the salvation of souls.

(Rules of 1826, Mss. Post.)

SPIRIT OF SERVICE AND OF UNITY

480 — **To Father Mille, at N.D. du Laus, August 23-25, 1836.**

Comparing what has been practised by us and the abuses that our young local superiors have permitted to creep into our houses and encouraged by their own example, fills me with painful thoughts. The local superiors, by dint of acting according to their own ideas, have just succeeded in re-making the Congregation. Furthermore, I can no more recognize my own spirit in the houses I have just visited, and how could it be found there when they never took the trouble to consult me?

Have I not often told you, young superiors, that necessity has obliged me to put you in charge of our communities long before you were fit to govern; that your big

defect was to follow your ideas instead of taking as your rule of conduct what had been done before you. Had you taken care to walk in our footsteps, you would not have introduced so many abuses, which I now have so much trouble to root out.

(Yenveux VII, 161-162)

481 — **To Father Guigues, in Canada, May 22, 1848.**

These are matters which you only skim over in your correspondence with me... It is not sufficient only to say a passing word about your projects, your affairs. You should explain them in detail...

You have built, I am told, a new wing to your house at Longueuil. Who has thought to breathe a word to me about this? It is imperative to regularize relations which go to strengthen more than you think the unity which must reign in all Congregations and the bonds of our fraternity.

(Yenveux VIII, 122)

542 The organization of the Congregation

482 — **To Father Léonard, in Canada, April 16, 1849.**

I am the man who acts least of all according to his own will. I am everybody's servant and my masters abuse their position to the extent of leaving me no time to do anything.

(Mss. Post.)

483 — **To Father Tempier, Visitor Extraordinary to Canada, June 24, 1851.**

If you had to deal with devoted and reliable men, this would be no problem, but how can one entrust the most precious interests of the Congregation to men who have not its spirit and have not attached themselves to it? I beg you to show no mercy about this, and to make them feel clearly how ridiculous, how absurd, how disordered it is to pretend during the life of the Founder to understand otherwise than he does the spirit of the Society and the direction in which it is moving! This is a form of opposition which I am very determined not to tolerate. If these Fathers, so proud, so head-

strong as they are, do not return from this erroneous path, I shall be obliged to consider means for bringing this scandal to an end. The intention of the one party and the conduct of the other are equally blameworthy.

(Yenveux V, 243)

484 — To Father Honorat, in Canada, September 2, 1851.

Now he (Tempier) will tell me all about what he has seen and done in his memorable visit. I would bless God for this with more warmth in my heart if I could persuade myself that all those whom God has given me were well penetrated with the spirit which must fill every Missionary Oblate of Mary. What would we not then receive from the grace of the Lord who goes before us so marvellously in every place! Fr. Tempier seems happy. I am less so when I think how obstinately people have murmured against the decisions and government of the Superior General, who, as has clearly been forgotten, is the Founder of the Congregation and whose spirit must therefore be taken

into account in the government of the Society, rather than people presuming to impose their spirit on him.

The habit of loftily blaming the local Superior has set them on this most reprehensible road, which I will in no way tolerate, so subversive is it of all order and so contrary to the most elementary notions of good sense. If only one subject had rendered himself culpable of this aberration, that would already be too much, but how could one not complain when one learns that he has formed a sort of school and that several others are joining him in the same error? I do not accuse you at all of this fault, my dear son, and I did not even mean to mention it to you when I took up my pen. It came to my mind quite naturally when I thought of men to whom I have given birth into the religious life and who allow whole years to pass without giving me a sign that they are alive and without thinking of learning from me the spirit which they must also show, if they acknowledge my fatherhood and the authority that the Church gives me over them. I hope that Fr. Tempier, in his journey and visit, will have recalled to people's minds the principles and laid down the lines

of conduct that must be followed from now on, so that I myself will no longer have anything to complain of.

(Yenveux V, 242)

485 — Circular Letter of the Founder after the revision of the Rules, August 2, 1853.

The additions made to our Rules consist chiefly in the establishment of Provinces. This necessarily leads to certain modifications in the administration of the Congregation. Several matters that directly concerned the Superior General now fall under the domain of the Provincials or Vicars of missions. The accounts section has been determined under a different form, and it is easily understandable that in the great extension the Lord had deigned to give to our little family, it is rather indispensable that a perfect order be established in all the sectors of the administration.

This division by Provinces, far from breaking the bonds that unite all the parts of the body to the head that rules it, on the contrary, facilitates the relationship by sim-

plifying communication which had become impossible, despite all the good will and the most absolute devotedness. There will be in every Province or Vicariate, an authority sufficient to settle the ordinary or more urgent cases; and the exact nature of the relationship of the Provincials and the Vicars with the Superior General will enable him to judge with knowledge, of course, in that which pertains to his responsibility and intervene with his supreme authority in everything that has to do with persons or matters of the entire Congregation...

The Provincials will remember that they derive all their power from a higher authority of which theirs is only an emanation, which has been imparted to them to the extent inherent in their office to represent the Superior General wherever there are sons of the family of whom he is the only father. Their whole endeavour will be to be imbued with his spirit and act only in conformity with his views, since the least divergence in this matter will harm the unity which is absolutely necessary for any good government.

(Copy. Post.)

486 — **To Father Vandenberghe, appointed superior of N.D. de l'Osier, March 10, 1854.**

Your appointment as superior of the house is not meant to ease your responsibilities. It is in this way, my dear son, that we are always the servants of the servants of God; for, if it is said in a certain sense to serve is to reign, in our case, to reign is to serve.

(*Yenveux VII, 135*)

487 — **To Father Vincens, June 2, 1859.**

Oh! how beautiful is Saint Paul's statement: *Nos autem servos vestros per Jesum*. If we meditate them a little, these words forestall all complaining. We will never be tempted to say, « That is enough », and even less, « That is too much », especially when the Lord of Lords grants health and strength such as I am enjoying. Let us go ahead then without complaining; on the contrary, let us enjoy the work we have to do for his glory and the welfare of the souls he has entrusted to us.

(*Mss. Post.*)

GOVERNMENT

488 — To Father Tempier, March 13, 1821.

The Founder, preaching a mission at St-Chamas, had learnt that Father Tempier, superior at N.D. du Laus, had established or authorized new practices in his community.

You must not put up with and still less authorize practices that are so contrary to good order. Have we become a republic or a representative government? Does it pertain to you to establish new usages and has the community of Notre Dame du Laus the right to *deliberate*, to present the least thing even in a body? Certainly not. So everything that has been done must be regarded as null, as an abuse and diametrically contrary to the spirit of our Constitutions. Each one is individually free in our Society to approach the Superior to communicate his thoughts on everything and even on the changing and improving of whatever is left to his disposition, local superiors are still more strictly obliged in this respect, but never will it ever be permitted to take the initiative of changing, improving, if you like, the usages practiced in the whole Society, whatever condi-

tion or restriction you may put on it. The time of the Chapter General is approaching, if I am not mistaken, then it will be time to propose all you please. This assembly will have the right to discuss and deliberate and its resolutions will be valid; until that time, only what is ordained by the Superior General will be legitimate.

(Yenveux VII, 159)

489 — **To Father Courtès, March 14, 1821.**

Doubtless being the superior of the house, you have the right to obtain an accounting of what the bursar is doing, that is why I did not hesitate to tell you that you ought to watch everything, but your authority does not extend to changing the instructions which have been given him by your own superior. He should do nothing without telling you in advance even in matters in which he has been authorized to proceed. As for those he would propose himself, he owes you obedience and you yourself ought, in your decisions, to make them in conformity with the spirit which guides me in my administration because, as long as I am supe-

rior, it is I who must give the guidance which all should follow, whatever they may think. Otherwise there would be friction in the machinery, there would no longer be unity in government and consequently disorder would be the result. This is the case with any government of whatever kind. I will add that in those based on religious virtues, it is necessary to do something more, that is to say, that one should strive to acquire enough humility to believe that one knows less and has less grace than the superior and, in consequence, be not afraid to conform even one's judgement to his.

(Yenveux III, 115; VII, 50)*

490 — **To Father Santoni, Provincial of Canada, June 26, 1854.**

I wish to say something to you about the way in which you inform me of your business, and in which, it seems, you deal with it in the Council. It resembles a little too much the parliamentary way of proceeding. This is not the manner of government that I have established in the Congregation. I ask you not to forget what I have said.

Once more you ask me insistently to be replaced in your position as Provincial... The reason for the term of three years for the duration of a Provincialate which our Rules prescribe has a real value which merits your consideration. Also, I assure you that I desire sincerely to be able to renew regularly in this way both Provincials and local Superiors in the Congregation; but you know that this is not easy, granted the state that our provinces and our houses are in.

(Yenveux VII, 23, 234)

491 — To Father Pierre Aubert, superior at Montreal, April 20, 1858.

You can see from experience what is gained by isolating oneself from the center and chief of a family, with regard to the direction of the subjects and the communities of an entire Province. Remember that the sap begins from the root and passes through the trunk of the tree to arrive at the branches and produce fruit. What has happened? During the most vigorous period in the youth of a Congregation that is just

coming to birth, in Canada people have fallen into the decrepitude of advanced age, the forerunner of the death of any society. May all the good that there is among you inspire you once more and give new life to all those corpses whose stink I can smell from here. If there is no ground for hope, let me know so that I can decide what must be done. I make this a duty in conscience for you. Correspond directly with me. Farewell, my dear son; you will see from this letter how distressed I am. I bless you and embrace you with all my heart.

(Copy. Reg. lettres 1855-1863, Post.)

SUPERIOR

492 — **To Father Tempier**, November 4, 1817.

God is my witness that it is not my ambition to be in command. That is so true that I cannot take it upon myself to give orders and just the word « superior » upsets a certain interior feeling which resists it every time it is pronounced, but I quite insist on order which cannot exist where there is no

subordination. Let them give me a superior and I swear to him in advance to be entirely submitted to him and promise him to act by his will which will be, in my eyes, that of God whose instrument he will be in regard to me. Please God you would wish to grant me this favour! That will come about, I hope.

(Yenveux III, 110)

493 — **To Father Mille, superior of Billens,**
August 26, 1831.

Let him fulfil his duties with a great spirit of faith, often praying to God for the assistance of his grace and examining in his presence how he accomplishes them. Let him thank God for having given him such a well disposed community and let him be convinced that he can easily maintain the good spirit that exists there if he always acts under God's spirit and with supernatural motives.

(Yenveux VII, 137)

**494 — Act of Visitation of the house of N.D.
du Laus, May 28, 1834.**

The first and most important (remark) is to rectify a mistaken opinion which seems to have been accepted without reflection, at different periods, by some who have become convinced that in the absence of the local superior, he who replaces him enjoys all his prerogatives, is vested with the same authority and can act with complete independence regarding everything that relates to the office he mistakenly believes he temporarily holds.

This opinion is contrary to the spirit and letter of our Constitutions. It is evident that the Rules entrust the local superior with so much of power only on the guarantee of a conscientious choice made of him by the Superior General, enlightened by his Council. This guarantee exists in fact only for one who has been chosen to hold this important office. It does not hold good at all for the one who replaces the local superior temporarily. So and so who may be in this situation... would not only not have been chosen by the Superior General to be the local superior, but on the contrary, he would have

been considered unfit for several more years for a post that demands the combination of so many rare qualities. How then is it possible for this individual to arrogate so much of power to himself and permit himself such latitude? So much for the spirit of the Rules which anyone can easily understand but which we intended to explain here since it is necessary... Hence it is always the local superior who governs even though absent. Thus the one who replaces him should not take anything upon himself, neither do nor undo anything, except in the case of an urgent need and even then, according to the known view of the local superior.

(Copy. Post.)

495 — **To Father Guigues, appointed superior of the new house of N.D. de l'Osier, September 3, 1834.**

The gratitude we owe God for this marvel cannot be expressed in any other way than by the firm resolution to walk always in his presence in accordance with our vocation and by strictly observing our Rules.

This responsibility rests on you, dearest Father Guigues, whom I have appointed superior of this new house and on whom I confidently entrust a good part of my solicitude. Open the book of our Rules so that everyone may draw inspiration therefrom and learn from it how he is to live. Reject the counsel of human prudence. True wisdom consists only in the accomplishment of one's duties; and these duties are determined and sanctioned by the infallible authority which has laid them upon us. Do not allow the least abuse to come in. You will have to answer for it to God, for you it is who are laying the foundations of the new community and it must spread far and wide the good odour of Jesus Christ.

(Yenveux VII, 156)

496 — To Father C. Aubert, master of novices at N.D. du Laus, May 18, 1836.

This is a very strange situation; I am surprised to see that as soon as one of our members is appointed superior in some community, he sets himself up as the sole master, disposes everything and settles every-

thing according to his own views without taking the trouble to ask for my guidance or to consult those whom the Rules give him as counsellors. As a matter of fact, our local superiors are acting much more independently than the Superior General who never acts without hearing those who are around him. They do not behave like this intentionally, but they give in to a kind of impulse, to a habit they have seen, I would say, being practised elsewhere, and it is thus that abuses take root.

(Yenveux VII, 198)

497 — To Father Mille, superior at N.D. du Laus, May 21, 1836.

Work on yourself to win the respect and confidence of others. To achieve this you must watch yourself very much: you are not doing enough to make people forget your age, by manifesting seriousness and poise in your relationship with those who live with you and whose superior you in fact are. When a person does not possess this naturally, he must make a studied effort, as in other things. You may not believe how much

a person discredits himself through certain familiarities, through a certain kind of joking which may at times make people laugh, but always to the detriment of kindness, especially when he is the superior among his equals.

(Yenveux VII, 186)

498 — **To Father Honorat, in Canada, January 10, 1843.**

This is not all. I want to know the opinions of the other members of the community which you ought to consider as your Council duty-bound and with whom, if they fail to adopt your ideas, you must not be annoyed as you were with Father Tempier when he did not approve all the windows you knocked out at Lumières and the constructions that we still find regrettable and which you extended farther than had been agreed. At that time you took it all upon yourself without asking the advice of those you had to consult; it is the same in Canada. In the name of Heaven, amend yourself and cease taking upon yourself alone a responsibility which necessarily has to be shared

by others and with which you cannot proceed, nay you cannot even propose it, without my consent. It is thus, by giving others marks of confidence, by showing them deference, by knowing how to modify one's own idea and to adopt those of others that one gains their sympathy, their help and their affection. I say this, not to upset you but uniquely for your own good. Who will tell you the truth if I do not? Why do you not put yourself right with respect to your Council? Why do you want to govern independently? Would you not have better success by putting some sweetness into your relations with everyone?... Do you wish to avoid opposition in the future? Keep to the Rule. Hold your meetings regularly and transact matters at them consultatively without ever wishing to gain your objective by authority. You shall see what strength will accrue to you from this way of proceeding...

Never complain about a person to someone else. When you have observations to make, make them to the person himself without fuss and cordially... You know that a true friend can be compared to a faithful mirror in which one can see oneself as one

is; if it reflects some imperfection, were it only a loose strand of hair, one is not annoyed with the mirror; on the contrary, one is thankful and relieved at having perceived it. *Alius sic alius vero sic*. You have something lacking to others, you lack something that others have. Be pleased with your share; you are well enough endowed. Bring to fruition only what God has given you, removing any remains of the rough exterior which at times repels and deters people from taking profit from it...

(*Yenveux VII, 179, 183, 199*)

499 — To Father Guigues, Visitor Extraordinary to Canada, July 16, 1844.

I am waiting to know the attitude you took on your arrival. It should have been perfectly clear right from the beginning and it must be sustained. Mildness and kindness but firmness. Let all abuses that have slipped in with an administration that was feeble, uncertain and vexatious, be pitilessly reformed. Imbue yourself with the spirit of the Rule and put it into practice but refrain from interposing therein ideas that could

only be your own. You would make yourself vulnerable and be discredited and lose all your influence. Have much consideration for your former confrères but they should identify with you somewhat so as to be of the same will as you. Act with prudence and circumspection but never vaunt your finesse and call attention to your skill when success comes your way. You know or know not that at Osier your reputation for finesse detracted from the consideration that was your due. Remember that you will lose your influence considerably if you appear to act, if not independently of me, at least without my knowledge and without having consulted or alerted me.

(Yenveux VII, 161, 196)

500 — **To Father Dassy, superior at Nancy,**
March 7, 1848.

Take care however, that you yourself give an example of the most accurate punctuality in everything prescribed by the Rules, be it for things or persons.

Not only Father Santoni but all the other Fathers have the right to make remarks

with due caution and respect: you, however, have the duty to abide and to require that others abide by what is written. In case of doubt, you must consult me. All this is to be done for the greater good in full respect which brothers, prompted by the love of Jesus Christ, owe one another.

(Yenveux VII, 162, 182)

501 — To Father Dassy, October 14, 1848.

I recommend that you govern with kindness. Do not harass your subjects; be charitable and patient. You have to be firm when necessary, but not harsh.

(Yenveux VIII, 148)

502 — To Father Dassy, October 16, 1849.

While waiting until I can complete your community, I have written to Father Vincens to send you Father Chaine who is very talented and a very good preacher. This young Father is an excellent person but he is so used to the paternal government of Father Vincens that he will not tolerate being treated as a school-boy. Watch this. Superiors are in charge of brothers, not

subordinates. They are bound to have much respect for those, who, though placed under their government, belong to the family; he must respect still more those who are to cooperate with him in maintaining good order and administration of the community...

Kindness is a quality that is indispensable to make obedience easy. In a word, reread the chapter concerning local superiors and model yourself on all you find there.

(Mss. Post.)

503 — To Father Verdet, superior at Brownsville, May 4, 1854.

You cannot leave your brethren outside your making decisions, on whatever matter. Nobody in the Congregation has the power to act on his own ideas, without taking the advice of those who form his Council. It is not always necessary to follow the advice of others, but they must always be consulted; and when one is not in agreement it is suitable, even on matters that fall within the proper competence of a superior, to consult with the major superior, for fear of

being too full of one's own ideas and deceiving oneself as to what is opportune or suitable.

Follow the prescriptions of the Rule so that regular discipline does not suffer through your fault. Be the first to give an example of faithfulness and regularity in everything.

The more you have my confidence, the more your manner of government must be gentle and kindly so that peace of soul and contentment may be preserved in all things.

(Yenveux VII, 141, 165, 202)

504 — To Father Baudre, at Galveston, August 23, 1854.

My dear Fr. Baudre, in appointing you Superior of our community of Galveston as you leave your novitiate, at the very moment when you make your oblation, I am giving you an important sign of my confidence. This confidence is based on the testimony that others have given me to your virtues, your zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, your attachment to the Congregation, your respect and deference to-

wards your superiors, your charity towards your brethren, and your desire to devote yourself entirely to the works that will be entrusted to you by obedience.

(Yenveux IX, 43)

505 — To Father Verdet, superior at Brownsville, August 24, 1854.

Once again I recommend you to be the first to give an example of the most precise discipline and of fidelity to all the prescriptions of the Rule. Re-read attentively the chapter on local Superiors and conform your own conduct to it, both as regards what you do yourself, and as regards your relations with others. Also, do not neglect the theological conferences, and be meticulous in the way in which you hold your Councils. Do not lose sight of the fact that, although you are a superior, you must not undertake or decide anything without taking the advice of your assessors and that, in the accounts which you send me, you must explain why on any occasion you thought it your duty to act against their advice, having been obliged to make up your mind without an opportun-

ity to consult me. These are the rules of wise administration, which, moreover, have the force of law among us.

(Yenveux VII, 161)

506 — **To Father Soullier, at Nancy, October 16, 1855.**

There you are at your destination. I am not surprised at the sentiments filled with modesty you express on the occasion of the responsibility you have been given. Were you to carry the burden all alone, I would support your views very strongly, but God is there to help you, for you must not doubt that it is his will that has been manifested to you through your superiors. Moreover, I am fully confident that you will be successful in your task in procuring the greatest glory of God, the salvation of souls to my satisfaction and the edification and honour of the Congregation. For this you will have to act always under the impulse of the Holy Spirit before God, keeping in mind only the good of the interests entrusted to you and always in conformity with the spirit and even the letter of the Rules, from which

you should try never to deviate. No one will have anything to say or to complain about if you are guided by the code which everyone must know and follow.

(Mss. Post.)

507 — Circular Letter of February 2, 1857.

After deploring the infidelities and the bad example of some, and the laxity of other communities, the Founder continues:

This reflection naturally leads me to acknowledge that the weakness of local superiors is one of the main causes of this disorder. In general, they are not conscientious about their duties. They are good men themselves but they do not know how to wield the authority vested in them by the Rules to maintain regularity among their men. They do not sufficiently realize that they have been placed at the head of their community to represent God, in whose name and by virtue of the Rules they are to govern; they are not sufficiently aware that they have a serious obligation of giving an account to the Church and to the Congregation for those who are entrusted to their care. They

are afraid of calling them to order when they begin to go astray, and they give in easily to all their weaknesses. In a word, the rigour of discipline weakens in their weak hands and, through their fault, people end up by losing sight of what constitutes a Religious, of what distinguishes him from an ordinary priest. And so, if we are not careful, our houses will soon become ordinary hotels where priests live under the same roof, but without any religious spirit and without regular discipline.

(Copy. Post.)

**508 — To Bishop Allard, at Pietermaritzburg,
November 10, 1857.**

What is particularly disturbing is that you have so many complaints about those working with you. Examine your conscience a little before God and see whether you ought not to make some changes in your relations with them and in the way you are running things... I beg you, my dear Lord Bishop, not to be angry at my observations. I make them only for the good they will do and to perform a duty which my conscience

enjoins upon me. Do not doubt that I applaud your good intentions and the motive which makes you act in everything. No one knows better than I the difficulties of governing men. That is why my long experience prompts me to suggest to you that you avoid putting all men into the same mould, and that you try to draw all you can from them with gentleness and sweetness.

I wish also to say that I am not alone in thinking that your judgement of Fr. Barret is too severe. We make the weak desperate when we have only reproaches to offer them. Make it your study to reach his heart; in that way you will obtain all you want. It is the way our Divine Saviour showed us.

(Copy. Reg. lettres 1855-1863, Post. DM 10)

COUNCIL

509 — **To Father Mille, superior of Billens,**
August 26, 1831.

The superior will not neglect to meet with his Council and he will listen to the remarks of the assessors, without abusing their kindness by never relaxing his views.

It does not mean that he has always to give in to their views, but that it is his duty to listen to them, to weigh their advice and then decide according to his soul and conscience. As for the admonitor, he is bound to obey him in many things especially in what concerns his personal conduct and health.

(Yenveux VII, 137)

510 — To Father C. Aubert, master of novices at N.D. du Laus, May 18, 1836.

I have noticed that there is no sufficient regularity in the handling of money; that the intent of the Rules regarding special Council meetings that are to take place in each house at fixed times, is not being fulfilled. I do not know if this is the fault of the assessors, but it is certain that these Council meetings, which are to be concerned with the moral as well as the temporal needs of every community, leave no discernible trace because they apparently do not accomplish anything in these meetings that is worth communicating to the Superior General, whom they leave in total ignorance of what was transacted. I would

like things to be put in order everywhere and I demand in all seriousness that in this matter just as in everything else, the Rules be observed, from which Rules I do not intend to dispense anyone.

(Yenveux VII, 200)

511 — To Father Mille, superior at N.D. du Laus, May 18, 1836.

In the Council meetings, the superior must make it easy for the assessors to dwell on all matters by listening to their remarks and profiting therefrom, for they do have a real say in the Council, and, according to the Constitutions, everything that concerns a house, in whatever manner, should be taken up in a Council. The superior must not only consult, but he must take the advice of the assessors into consideration, especially when it is backed up by good reasons. I would like you to pay much attention to my remarks, so that they serve as explanations, when necessary, not only for the house of Laus, but for the others and that for all time.

(Yenveux VII, 200)

512 — **To Father Honorat, superior at Longueuil, January 17, 1843.**

The Superior is bound to consult his Council so that he may not be inclined to undertake something foolhardy or follow peculiar ideas. But in council, never let yourself be moved by passion or obstinacy in your own ideas. Discuss peaceably always in view of the greatest good, modifying at need your own opinion as any reasonable man should do when he perceives that he goes too far or is not forthright enough. Afterwards, whenever the case requires, notify me before concluding the matter and keep me fully informed. To this end, be strict in your correspondence. Although postage on letters is dear, it does not upset me to receive precisely one letter per month, well filled as yours have been so far. You must not be afraid to query me when you believe I have given a decision which presents some problems. It will probably be because I have not been sufficiently informed.

(Yenveux VII, 202)

513 — To Father Dassy, March 7, 1848.

Avoid giving the impression that you act like the master; to achieve this, willingly consult those who have been chosen to be on your Council. Do not fail to do this especially during the period determined in the Rules so that no one could ever accuse you of taking or ignoring the Rules according to your will.

(Yenveux VII, 201)

514 — To Father Santoni, Provincial of Canada, January 20, 1856.

Relationship with Bishop Guigues of Bytown.

I do beg you, my dear Father, when you are considering the plan that he will be putting to you, to put aside all prejudice and not to allow yourself to be influenced by any of those misjudgements that threaten to lead our minds into error, by making him seem to be looking at the matter from a wrong point of view. After having made this impartial and conscientious examination of the proposal, you are to discuss it with your Council, and then make to me a report on

your deliberations so that we can make the final judgement here and come to a definitive decision.

(Copy. Reg. lettres 1855-1863, Post. DM 10)

PROVINCIAL

515 — To Father Santoni, appointed Provincial of Canada, July 2, 1851.

In the exercise of your charge, take care to do all according to the Rules and Constitutions, for the good, both spiritual and temporal, of the Province which has been entrusted to you. Do not omit to render account to us every month, and more frequently if need be, of business conducted by you and of all that concerns the state of the Congregation in your Province.

Go then, dear son, under the auspices of obedience to the task that has been assigned to you; strive day and night to show yourself a good administrator, a good Shepherd towards our men engaged in the service of God in those parts, and strive to accomplish in your words and with your heart the duties of a prudent father. Be

full of care above all to preserve among them the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace and to promote ceaselessly zeal and practice of regular observance; to this end we pray heaven to grant you powerful aid and the generous protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary conceived without sin.

(Latin Text. Yenveux VII, 123)

516 — Circular Letter to the whole Congregation after the revision of the Rules and the division into Provinces, August 2, 1853.

We must acknowledge that the Provincials and Vicars will have a great responsibility in the intermediary position in which the Rules place them. The future of the Congregation is to a great extent, in their hands. If they are well imbued with the importance of their responsibility, they will maintain perfect regularity either by the annual visitation of the Province entrusted to their care, or through regular correspondence with the local superiors and the other members of the communities of their jurisdiction. Unrelenting as regards observance of the Rules, they will be the first to give

an example of a fidelity above every test, and compassionate towards the real needs of those who suffer, they will take the utmost care not to allow any abuse to set in under any pretext whatsoever. Their delegated authority is granted to them only to maintain regularity and not to approve the least slackening either by their example or through weakness.

(Copy. Post.)

CHAPTER

517 — **To Father Honorat, in Canada, April 27, 1843.**

He who comes to the Chapter must not bring his own ideas but the will and the desires of his constituents.

(Mss. Post.)

518 — **Letter of convocation of the Chapter, March 19, 1850.**

Under the patronage of the kind and most holy Immaculate Virgin Mary, our Mother, the Congregation of the Oblates will continue being like a tree planted by

the river of living waters. No doubt, it has already borne much fruit; and it will produce still more and continue to prosper if it remains faithful, if it does not become lax, and especially if it is inflamed with a very ardent love for Christ, in the unity of the Spirit, who is the « bond of perfection ».

In order to strengthen this precious bond of unity and peace and to tighten its most intimate links, to observe the Constitutions of the Institute and the prescriptions of the previous General Chapter, we convoke the General Assembly of our entire family.

The spread of our Congregation over which we rejoice together with you and for which we joyfully thank God, is so remarkable, so wonderful that it has led us and urges us to take certain decisions for the good of the Society and to clarify some problems raised by the present state of our Congregation. The ministry carried on with so much of zeal and good results by the greater part of our men in numerous parts of the world; the number of souls that are still lying in the shadows of death or of error; the limited number of missionaries whom we have been able to send to bring them the light of the truth and the grace of salvation, have obliged

us, against our wish, to separate the labourers from one another, so that their ministry of salvation may, in some way, be multiplied and the grace of salvation may spread more easily through the word of truth...

However, the desire to increase God's glory and the zeal to bring or at least to lead back to the fold of the Good Sheperd the greatest number of souls, have not relieved us of the sacred obligation to provide with very great love for the welfare and salvation of the sons Christ has entrusted to us. On the contrary, they have imprinted it more vividly and more deeply in the depths of our heart. Also, lest the long distances too greatly hinder communication with us, and especially lest they loosen the bonds that must constantly unite in Christ the Congregation's members, each one with the Head and among themselves; and finally so that our authority may be present everywhere at the same time, we establish permanent Visitors enjoying the powers, rights and prerogatives which we have deemed good to bestow on them for the benefit of all...

All those whom this may concern are therefore invited to foresee everything and

prepare for the General Chapter, which, God willing, will take place in our Major Seminary of Marseilles, on August 26, 1850. Let us pray fervently in every community of the Congregation for this intention, so dear to us.

(Printed text, Gen. Arch. O.M.I.)

519 — **Diary**, August 12, 1856.

Today we close the General Chapter. The minutes of the different sessions will present an exact account of all that had taken place. I will only say that it is impossible to see a more impressive assembly in a religious Congregation. It was composed of twenty one members, three of whom were bishops and a fourth, bishop-elect, about to be consecrated. During the long sessions that lasted seven days, everything was done with seriousness and remarkable harmony. One and the same spirit reigned among all the members; the discussions were most appropriate with regard to the content and most charitable in their form; always they led to a unanimous decision to the satisfaction of everyone. The *cor unum et anima una*

of the first Gospel disciples could very well be applied to this meeting.

It was also quite moving to see during the interval between sessions, with what joy, what cordiality, all the members, scattered over the different parts of the world, met together and gave mutual evidence of fraternal love. For me this was the most consoling point, the more so that all of them made it a point to manifest to their aged father all the affection and respect their hearts can express in return for what they very well know that I nourish for them.

(Rambert II, 459)

ADMINISTRATION OF TEMPORAL GOODS

520 — **To Father Tempier**, January 22, 1826.

I would like you never to lose sight of one thing that is always in my mind, namely, that there is no one in the Congregation who has a cent, and that on the day when certain sources will be no more we will be very much at a loss as to how to feed and clothe so many people. I know that we have

to count on divine Providence and on christian wisdom. That is why my goal has always been to set up a capital which would provide for the most pressing ordinary needs, evidently not with the idea of amassing money but to supplement the funds which all Congregations have in every country of the world, because if it some day happens that we are left only with Mass stipends, there will be nothing to make our communities function. If this money is used for building purposes, we are reduced to zero. Think well about it, for men who dedicate themselves to serve God in the Congregation, have a right to have their needs taken care of. If they did not bring in anything, it is not their fault. We knew about it and had agreed to it.

(Yenveux VII, 89)

521 — To Father Tempier, Visitor Extraordinary to Canada, June 24, 1851.

Relationship with Bishop Guigues.

And so you will have to be firm, whatever he may say, in separating his financial interests from those of the Congregation.

We cannot agree to his touching all the revenue and imagining that he has fulfilled his duty to the Congregation by feeding and clothing the subjects who serve in his diocese. Nothing could be more beautiful and edifying than to live in community with missionaries. That was what the Bishop should have done, instead of gaining control of everything and drawing everything towards himself, and he should have arranged matters in such a way that a way of life suitable to missionaries was assured for the present and above all for the future. He has done nothing of this. Why does he take the entire allowance from the Propagation of the Faith instead of sharing some of it with our Fathers? The Councils assume that he is for his former brethren what a Vicar Apostolic is for the missionaries whom he heads.

It is absolutely essential that the Fathers have an assured income from which to feed themselves, buy what is necessary for them, and save something for emergencies and as provision for the future. It is the duty of the Bishop to arrange matters so that a life suitable for missionaries is guaranteed for the present, and above all for the future.

(Yenveux III, 47; VII, 47)

522 — **Circular Letter**, August 2, 1853.

Temporal administration and accounting, I repeat, demand very detailed and close attention. Hitherto serious reproaches have had to be made in this matter. Each community considered only its own needs and bothered very little about the general needs of the Congregation. Personal expenses sometimes rose far above what is allowed by the practice of poverty of which every member has made profession by a vow. Some were nothing short of being indifferent in regard to the quality, quantity or style of clothes. The weakness of certain local superiors permitted the abuse that some gave orders to the kitchen brothers or to the treasurers; and if, after these abuses, something still was left over in the coffers of the house, these petty savings were used up under various pretexts and arbitrary and, at times, childish interpretations of the Rules, for alleged needs without submitting them to the judgment of the Superior General.

This state of affairs cannot continue; it is not found anywhere in other religious Congregations, all of which understand that

the entire Society has to be maintained by the members, and have provided for it through wise regulations. The same principles must be in force among us. Hence I recommend very explicitly that the Provincials, Vicars of Missions and all local superiors abide strictly by the precepts of the Rules and to the authorized customs, with regard to food and clothing of the religious, or furniture repairs, demolition or construction of buildings. Similarly I also recommend that they keep accounts as prescribed by the Rules and as indicated at the top of the printed registers, the use of which I have previously prescribed.

(Copy. Post.)

**523 — To Bishop Blanchet of Nesqually,
December 1853.**

As for the relations between the Oblates and Your Lordship and with the other prelates of Oregon in temporal matters, after what you say in the papers that you have sent to me, and after your letters to Fr. Richard, I do not see that these need raise any serious difficulty from now on. The Oblates will continue to make to the Propagation of the

Faith their requests for help independently from those of the bishops. This allocation will serve first for their food and sustenance, and then for the maintenance of the central house which the bishops recognise must exist in each diocese as the exclusive property of the Congregation of Mary Immaculate. The places which our Fathers will occupy in Oregon, other than the chief house of which I have just spoken, under whatever title they have been erected, whether that of mission or that of parish, belong by right to the diocese. The properties attached to these establishments do not belong in any way to our Congregation, the Congregation will only have the usufruct of them, and if the Congregation leaves, all reverts to the diocese, both the movable and the immovable articles of the church and the presbytery, of which there must always be an inventory which establishes what the Fathers found there, and what they leave behind them when they go. This does not exclude the possibility that the Fathers may have bought something with money other than that of the mission or the parish, for example with money that they have saved, and this will truly belong to them, with the result that they may dis-

pose of it. Now that matters have been spelt out and agreed in this way, it seems to me that there is no longer room for any misunderstanding, and that from now on the Oblates of Mary will be able to devote themselves with all the ardor that their zeal inspires to various labors of the apostolic ministry and especially to the establishment of the faith among the Indians.

(Copy. Ottawa, Arch. Deschâtelets)

524 — **To Father Vignole, at Galveston, August 23, 1854.**

I need to consult you to know which of you should be procurator or bursar. I would like to appoint the man whom you consider to be most precise and most economical. I am asking you a serious question, and I ask you to reply to it categorically as soon as possible, that is to say, by return of post. Frankly, I do not know what you think about this, and so I need to rely on your conscience. Tell me at the same time whom you judge to be more suitable for this delicate office among those of our men who live at Brownsville.

(Yenveux VII, 237)

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